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
Accompanying Young People

The Fifteenth Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment” was held in Rome October 3 – 28. This assembly followed a long period of listening to and reflecting with thousands of young people, first in dioceses around the world and then also in Rome.

The words of Pope Francis and of the participants in this Church assembly, as well as the testimony of the young people present in the Synod hall, showed the world that “faith is a powerful light, capable of illuminating a person's future and inspiring desires for a fulfilled life,” as Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz said in an article republished in this issue of Romana.

During the month of October, the Church had as its principal prayer intention the present and future of young people. As Pope Francis said when closing this assembly: “May the Lord bless our steps, so that we can listen to young people, be their neighbors, and bear witness before them to Jesus, the joy of our lives.” (Homily, Holy Mass for the Closing of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, October 28, 2018).

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“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26). These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.

1. If one member suffers…

In recent days, a report was made public which detailed the experiences of at least a thousand survivors, victims of sexual abuse, the abuse of power and of conscience at the hands of priests over a period of approximately seventy years. Even though it can be said that most of these cases belong to the past, nonetheless as time goes on we have come to know the pain of many of the victims. We have realized that these wounds never disappear and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities and join forces in uprooting this culture of death; these wounds never go away. The heart-wrenching pain of these victims, which cries out to heaven, was long ignored, kept quiet or silenced. But their outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it, or sought even to resolve it by decisions that increased its gravity by falling into complicity. The Lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side he stands. Mary’s song is not mistaken and continues quietly to echo throughout history. For the Lord
remembers the promise he made to our fathers: “he has scattered the proud in their conceit; he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty” (Lk 1:51-53). We feel shame when we realize that our style of life has denied, and continues to deny, the words we recite.

With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives. We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them. I make my own the words of the then Cardinal Ratzinger when, during the Way of the Cross composed for Good Friday 2005, he identified with the cry of pain of so many victims and exclaimed: “How much filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to [Christ]! How much pride, how much self-complacency! Christ’s betrayal by his disciples, their unworthy reception of his body and blood, is certainly the greatest suffering endured by the Redeemer; it pierces his heart. We can only call to him from the depths of our hearts: Kyrie eleison – Lord, save us! (cf. Mt 8:25)” (Ninth Station).

2. … all suffer together with it

The extent and the gravity of all that has happened requires coming to grips with this reality in a comprehensive and communal way. While it is important and necessary on every journey of conversion to acknowledge the truth of what has happened, in itself this is not enough. Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit. If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history. And this in an environment where conflicts, tensions and above all the victims of every type of abuse can encounter an outstretched hand to protect them and rescue them from their pain (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 228). Such solidarity demands that we in turn condemn whatever endangers the integrity of any person. A solidarity that summons us to fight all forms of corruption, especially spiritual corruption. The latter is “a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness. Everything then appears acceptable:
deception, slander, egotism and other subtle forms of self-centeredness, for ‘even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’ (2 Cor 11:14)” (Gaudete et Exsultate, 165). Saint Paul’s exhortation to suffer with those who suffer is the best antidote against all our attempts to repeat the words of Cain: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9).

I am conscious of the effort and work being carried out in various parts of the world to come up with the necessary means to ensure the safety and protection of the integrity of children and of vulnerable adults, as well as implementing zero tolerance and ways of making all those who perpetrate or cover up these crimes accountable. We have delayed in applying these actions and sanctions that are so necessary, yet I am confident that they will help to guarantee a greater culture of care in the present and future.

Together with those efforts, every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does. For as Saint John Paul II liked to say: “If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he wished to be identified” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 49). To see things as the Lord does, to be where the Lord wants us to be, to experience a conversion of heart in his presence. To do so, prayer and penance will help. I invite the entire holy faithful People of God to a penitential exercise of prayer and fasting, following the Lord’s command. This can awaken our conscience and arouse our solidarity and commitment to a culture of care that says “never again” to every form of abuse.

It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People. Indeed, whenever we have tried to replace, or silence, or ignore, or reduce the People of God to small elites, we end up creating communities, projects, theological approaches, spiritualities and structures without roots, without memory, without faces, without bodies and ultimately, without lives. This is clearly seen in a peculiar way of understanding the Church’s authority, one common in many communities where sexual abuse and the abuse of power and conscience have occurred. Such is the case with clericalism, an approach that “not only nullifies the character of Christians,
but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.” Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today. To say “no” to abuse is to say an emphatic “no” to all forms of clericalism.

It is always helpful to remember that “in salvation history, the Lord saved one people. We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in the human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people” (Gaudete et Exsultate, 6). Consequently, the only way that we have to respond to this evil that has darkened so many lives is to experience it as a task regarding all of us as the People of God. This awareness of being part of a people and a shared history will enable us to acknowledge our past sins and mistakes with a penitential openness that can allow us to be renewed from within. Without the active participation of all the Church’s members, everything being done to uproot the culture of abuse in our communities will not be successful in generating the necessary dynamics for sound and realistic change. The penitential dimension of fasting and prayer will help us as God’s People to come before the Lord and our wounded brothers and sisters as sinners imploring forgiveness and the grace of shame and conversion. In this way, we will come up with actions that can generate resources attuned to the Gospel. For “whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world” (Evangelii Gaudium, 11).

It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn, with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics, and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable. Let us beg forgiveness for our own sins and the sins of others. An awareness of sin helps us to acknowledge the errors, the crimes and the wounds caused in the past and allows us, in the
present, to be more open and committed along a journey of renewed conversion.

Likewise, penance and prayer will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people’s sufferings and to overcome the thirst for power and possessions that are so often the root of those evils. May fasting and prayer open our ears to the hushed pain felt by children, young people and the disabled. A fasting that can make us hunger and thirst for justice and impel us to walk in the truth, supporting all the judicial measures that may be necessary. A fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will, and with society in general, to combatting all forms of the abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience.

In this way, we can show clearly our calling to be “a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race” (Lumen Gentium, 1).

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it,” said Saint Paul. By an attitude of prayer and penance, we will become attuned as individuals and as a community to this exhortation, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation. Mary chose to stand at the foot of her Son’s cross. She did so unhesitatingly, standing firmly by Jesus’ side. In this way, she reveals the way she lived her entire life. When we experience the desolation caused by these ecclesial wounds, we will do well, with Mary, “to insist more upon prayer”, seeking to grow all the more in love and fidelity to the Church (Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, 319). She, the first of the disciples, teaches all of us as disciples how we are to halt before the sufferings of the innocent, without excuses or cowardice. To look to Mary is to discover the model of a true follower of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the grace of conversion and the interior anointing needed to express before these crimes of abuse our compunction and our resolve courageously to combat them.

Vatican City, August 20, 2018

Francis
Address to the World Meetings of Families, Croke Park, Dublin, Ireland (August 25, 2018)

_Dia dhaoibh_ (Irish for “good evening!”)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good evening!

I am grateful to all of you for your warm welcome. It is good to be here! It is good to celebrate, for celebration makes us more human and more Christian. It also helps us to share the joy of knowing that Jesus loves us, he accompanies us on our journey of life, and each day he draws us closer to himself.

In any family celebration, everyone’s presence is felt: fathers, mothers, grandparents, grandchildren, uncles and aunts, cousins, those who cannot come and those who live too far away, everyone. Today in Dublin we are gathered for a family celebration of thanksgiving to God for who we are: one family in Christ, spread throughout the world. The Church is the family of God’s children. A family in which we rejoice with those who are rejoicing, and weep with those who grieve or feel knocked down by life. A family in which we care for everyone, for God our Father has made all of us his children in Baptism. That is one reason why I keep encouraging parents to baptize their children as soon as possible, so that they can become part of this great family of God. We need to invite everyone to the party, even the smallest child! That is why children should be baptized soon after birth. There is something else: if a child is baptized as a baby, the Holy Spirit enters that child’s heart. Let’s make a comparison [between] a child who is unbaptized, because the parents say: “No, wait till he or she grows up”, and a baby who is baptized and has the Holy Spirit within. That child is stronger, because he or she has the strength of God within!
You, dear families, are the vast majority of the People of God. What would the Church look like without you? A Church of statues, a Church of lone individuals… It was to help us recognize the beauty and importance of the family, with its lights and shadows, that the Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* on the joy of love was written, and that I wanted the theme of this World Meeting of Families to be “The Gospel of the Family, Joy for the World.” God wants every family to be a beacon of the joy of his love in our world. What does this mean? It means that we, who have encountered God’s saving love, try, with or without words, to express it in little acts of kindness in our daily routine and in the most hidden moments of our day.

And what is this called? It is called *holiness*. I like to speak of the saints “next door,” all those ordinary people who reflect God’s presence in the life and history of our world (cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 6-7). The vocation to love and to holiness is not something reserved for a privileged few. No. Even now, if we have eyes to see, we can see it being lived out all around us. It is silently present in the heart of all those families that offer love, forgiveness and mercy when they see the need, and do so quietly, without great fanfare. The Gospel of the family is truly joy for the world, since there, in our families, Jesus can always be found, dwelling in simplicity and poverty as he did in the home of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Christian marriage and family life are only seen in all their beauty and attractiveness if they are anchored in the love of God, who created us in his own image, so that we might give him glory as icons of his love and holiness in the world. Fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, children and grandchildren: each and every one of us. All of us are called to find, in the family, our fulfillment in love. God’s grace helps us daily to live as one in mind and heart. Even daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law! No one said this would be easy. You know that better than I. It is like making tea: it is easy to bring the water to a boil, but a good cup of tea takes time and patience; it needs to brew! So it is that each day Jesus warms us with his love and lets it penetrate our whole being. From the treasury of his Sacred Heart, he offers us the grace we need to heal our infirmities and to open our minds and hearts to hear, understand, and forgive one another.
We just heard the testimonies of Felicité, Isaac and Ghislain, who are from Burkina Faso. They told us a moving story of forgiveness in the family. The poet says that “to err is human, to forgive divine.” And that is true: forgiveness is a special gift from God that heals our brokenness and draws us closer to one another and to him. Small and simple acts of forgiveness, renewed each day, are the foundation upon which a solid Christian family life is built. They force us to overcome our pride, our aloofness and embarrassment, and to make peace. How many times do we get angry at one another and then want to make up, but we don’t know how! It is embarrassing to make peace, but we still want to do it. It isn’t hard. It’s easy. Give a caress, and peace is made!

It is true that I like to say that in our families we need to learn three words. Ghislain, you spoke those three words. They are “sorry”, “please” and “thank you.” Three words. What were they? Everyone! [all: “sorry, please, thank you!”] Another time! [“sorry, please, thank you!”]. I can’t hear you! [“sorry, please, thank you!”] Thank you very much! When you quarrel at home, be sure that before going to bed you apologize and say you are sorry. Before the day is done, make peace. Do you want to know why it is necessary to make peace before ending the day? Because if you don’t make peace, the next day you have a “cold war” and that is very dangerous! Watch out for cold wars in the family! Maybe you get mad sometimes and are tempted to sleep in another room, all by yourself. If you feel that way, just knock on the door and say: “Please, can I come in?” All it takes is a look, a kiss, a soft word… and everything is back to the way it was! I say this because when families do this, they survive. There is no such thing as a perfect family; without the practice of forgiveness, families can grow sick and gradually collapse.

To “forgive” means to “give” something of yourself. Jesus always forgives us. By the power of his forgiveness, we too can forgive others, if we really want to. Isn’t that what we pray for, when we say the Our Father? Children learn to forgive when they see their parents forgiving one another. If we understand this, we can appreciate the grandeur of Jesus’ teaching about fidelity in marriage. Far from a cold legal obligation, it is above all a powerful promise of God’s own fidelity to his word and his unfailing grace. Christ died for us so that we, in turn, might forgive and be reconciled with
one another. In this way, as individuals and as families, we can know the truth of Saint Paul’s words that, when all else passes away, “love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8).

Thank you Nisha and Ted, for your testimony from India, where you are teaching your children how to be a true family. You have helped us to understand that social media are not necessarily a problem for families, but can also serve to build a “web” of friendships, solidarity, and mutual support. Families can connect through the internet and draw nourishment from it. Social media can be beneficial if used with moderation and prudence. For example, all of you gathered for this World Meeting of Families have formed a spiritual network, a web of friendship; social media can help you to maintain this connection and expand it to even more families throughout the world. It is important, though, that these media never become a threat to the real web of flesh and blood relationships by imprisoning us in a virtual reality and isolating us from the concrete relationships that challenge us to grow to our full potential in communion with others.

Perhaps Ted and Nisha’s story will help all families to question whether they need to cut down on the time they spend with technology, and to spend more quality time with one another and with God. When you use the social media too much, you “spin into orbit”. When at table, instead of talking to one another as a family, everyone starts playing with his or her cell phone, they “spin into orbit”. This is dangerous. Why? Because it takes you away from the concrete reality of the family and into a life of distraction and unreality. Be careful about this. Remember Ted and Nisha’s story; they teach us to make good use of the social media.

We have heard from Enass and Sarmaad how a family’s love and faith can be a source of strength and peace even amid the violence and destruction caused by war and persecution. Their story reminds us of the tragic situations endured daily by so many families forced to flee their homes in search of security and peace. But they also show us how, starting from the family, and thanks to the solidarity shown by so many other families, lives can be rebuilt and hope born anew. We saw this support in the video of Rammy and his brother Meelad, where Rammy expressed his deep gratitude for the encouragement and help their family received from
so many other Christian families worldwide, who made it possible for them to return to their village. In every society, families generate peace, because they teach the virtues of love, acceptance, and forgiveness that are the best antidote to the hatred, prejudice, and vengeance that can poison the life of individuals and communities.

As a good Irish priest taught us, “the family that prays together, stays together” and radiates peace. In a special way, such a family can be a support for other families that do not live in peace. Following the death of Father Ganni, Enass, Sarmaad and their family chose forgiveness and reconciliation over hatred and resentment. They saw, in the light of the cross, that evil can only be fought by good, and hatred overcome only by forgiveness. Almost incredibly, they were able to find peace in the love of Christ, a love that makes all things new. This evening they share that peace with us. They prayed. Prayer. Praying together. While I was listening to the choir, I saw a mother teaching her child to make the sign of the cross. Let me ask you, do you teach your children to make the sign of the cross? Yes or no? [all: yes!] Or do you teach them to make some quick wave of the hand [he gestures] that they don’t even understand? It is very important that children learn as early as possible to make the sign of the cross well. It is the first “creed” that they learn, a way of saying “I believe” in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This evening, before going to bed, ask yourselves, as parents: do I teach my children to make a good sign of the cross? Think about it, it is up to you!

The love of Christ that renews all things is what makes possible marriage and a conjugal love marked by fidelity, indissolubility, unity and openness to life. It is what we see in the fourth chapter of Amoris Laetitia. We saw this love in Mary and Damian and their family of ten children. Let me ask you [he turns to Mary and Damian], do your children ever make you grow angry? Ah, that is life! But it is beautiful to have ten children. Thank you for your testimony and for your witness of love and faith! You experienced the power of God’s love to change your lives completely and to bless you with the joy of a beautiful family. You told us that the key to your family life is truthfulness. From your story, we see how important it is to keep going back to the source of the truth and the love that can change our lives. Who is it? Jesus, who began his public ministry precisely at a wedding.
feast. There, in Cana, he changed water into a good new wine that kept the joyful celebration going strong.

Did you ever think of what would have happened if Jesus did not perform that miracle? Did you ever think how terrible it would be to finish a wedding feast by drinking just water? It would be awful! Our Lady understood that, and so she told her Son: “They have no wine.” And Jesus realized that the party would not have ended happily with people just drinking water. Conjugal love is like that. The new wine begins to ferment during the time of engagement, which is necessary but fleeting, and matures throughout marriage in a mutual self-giving that enables spouses to become, from two, “one flesh.” And also to open their hearts, in turn, to all those in need of love, especially the lonely, the abandoned, the weak and vulnerable so often discarded by our throw-away culture. The culture we are living in today discards everything, everything that is not useful. It discards babies because they are troublesome; it discards the elderly because they aren’t useful… Only love saves us from this throw-away culture.

Families everywhere are challenged to keep growing, to keep moving forward, even amid difficulties and limitations, just as past generations did. All of us are part of a great chain of families stretching back to the beginning of time. Our families are a treasury of living memory, as children become parents and grandparents in turn. From them we receive our identity, our values and our faith. We see this in Aldo and Marissa, who have been married for over fifty years. Their marriage is a monument to love and fidelity! Their grandchildren keep them young; their house is filled with laughter, happiness and dancing. It was delightful to see [in the video] the grandmother teaching her granddaughters how to dance! Their love for one another is a gift from God, and it is a gift that they are joyfully passing on to their children and grandchildren.

A society —listen carefully to this!— a society that does not value grandparents is a society that has no future. A Church that is not mindful of the covenant between generations will end up lacking the thing that really matters, which is love. Our grandparents teach us the meaning of conjugal and parental love. They themselves grew up in a family and experienced the love of sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. So they are a treasury of experience, a treasury of wisdom for the new generation. It is a
big mistake not to ask the elderly about their experience, or to think that talking to them is a waste of time. Here I would like to thank Missy for her words of witness. She told us that, among travellers, the family has always been a source of strength and solidarity. Her witness reminds us that, in God’s house, there is a place at table for everyone. No one is to be excluded; our love and care must extend to all.

I know it is late and you are tired! So am I! But let me say one last thing to all of you. As families, you are the hope of the Church and of the world! God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, created mankind in his image and likeness to share in his love, to be a family of families, and to enjoy the peace that he alone can give. By your witness to the Gospel, you can help God’s dream to come true. You can help to draw all God’s children closer together, so that they can grow in unity and learn what it is for the entire world to live in peace as one great family. For this reason, I wanted to give each of you a copy of *Amoris Laetitia*, prepared in the two Synods on the family and written as a kind of roadmap for living joyfully the Gospel of the family. May Mary our Mother, Queen of the Family and Queen of Peace, sustain all of you in your journey of life, love and happiness!

And now, at the conclusion of our evening together, we will recite the prayer for this World Meeting of Families. Let us all recite together the official prayer for the Meeting of Families:

[Recitation of the prayer and blessing]

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Homily at the Mass Opening the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Youth, The Vatican (October 3, 2018)

“The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all that I have
said to you” (Jn 14:26).

In this straightforward way, Jesus offers his disciples the assurance that will accompany all the missionary work to be entrusted to them: the Holy Spirit will be the first to preserve, to keep alive and relevant, the memory of the Lord in the heart of his disciples. It is the Spirit who ensures that the richness and beauty of the Gospel will be a source of constant joy and freshness.

At the start of this moment of grace for the whole Church, and following God’s word, we ask the Paraclete to help us preserve the memory of the Lord and rekindle in us his words that have made our hearts burn (cf. Lk 24:32). A Gospel ardour and passion which lead to an ardor and passion for Jesus. A memory that can rekindle and renew in us the capacity to dream and to hope. For we know that our young people will be capable of prophesy and vision to the extent that we, who are already adult or elderly, can dream and thus be infectious in sharing those dreams and hopes that we carry in our hearts (cf. Joel 2:28).

May the Spirit grant us the grace to be synodal Fathers anointed with the gift of dreaming and of hoping. We will then, in turn, be able to anoint our young people with the gift of prophecy and vision. May the Spirit give us the grace to be a memory that is diligent, living, and effective, that does not allow itself from one generation to the next to be extinguished or crushed by the prophets of doom and misfortune, by our own shortcomings, mistakes, and sins. Rather may it be a memory capable of enkindling our hearts and of discerning the ways of the Spirit. With this attitude of docile listening to the voice of the Spirit, we have gathered from all parts of the world. Today, for the first time, we have also with us two bishops from mainland China. We offer them our warm welcome: the communion of the entire Episcopate with the Successor of Peter is yet more visible thanks to their presence.

Anointed by hope, let us begin a new ecclesial meeting. One that can broaden our horizons, expand our hearts and transform those frames of mind that today paralyze, separate, and alienate us from young people, leaving them exposed to stormy seas, orphans without a faith community.
that should sustain them, orphans devoid of a sense of direction and meaning in life (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49).

Hope challenges us, moves us and shatters that conformism which says, "it’s always been done like this." Hope asks us to get up and look directly into the eyes of young people and see their situations. This same hope asks us to make efforts to reverse situations of uncertainty, exclusion, and violence, to which our young people are exposed.

Having been formed by so many choices taken in the past, young people now call us to join them in facing the present with greater commitment and to work against whatever prevents their lives from growing in a dignified way. They ask us and demand of us a creative dedication, a dynamism which is intelligent, enthusiastic and full of hope. They ask us not to leave them alone in the hands of so many pedlars of death who oppress their lives and darken their vision.

This capacity to dream together that our Lord offers the Church today as a gift, requires, as Saint Paul expresses in the first reading, that we cultivate one specific attitude: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (*Phil 2:4*). And it requires that we aim even higher, humbly considering others to be better than ourselves (cf. v.3). In this spirit we will try to listen to one another, in order to discern together what the Lord is asking of his Church. And this demands that we be really careful against succumbing to a self-preservation and self-centeredness which gives importance to what is secondary yet makes secondary what is important. Love for the Gospel and for the people who have been entrusted to us, challenges us to broaden our horizons and not lose sight of the mission to which we are called. In this way we shall aim for an even greater good that will benefit all of us. Without this disposition, all of our efforts will be in vain.

The gift of that ability to listen, sincerely and prayerfully, as free as possible from prejudice and conditioning, will help us to be part of those situations which the People of God experience. Listening to God, so that with him we can listen to the cry of the people; listening to our people, so that we can breathe in with them the desire to which God calls us (cf.
Address during the Prayer Vigil in preparation for the Synod on the Family, 4 October 2014).

This disposition protects us from the temptation of falling into moralistic or elitist postures, and it protects us from the lure of abstract ideologies that never touch the realities of our people (cf. J.M. Bergoglio, Meditations for Religious, 45-46).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us entrust this time to the maternal protection of Our Lady. May she, the woman who listens and cherishes memories, accompany us in recognizing the signs of the Spirit, so that with a sense of urgency (cf. Lk 1:39), with our dreams and hopes, we may accompany and encourage our young people to always continue prophesying.

Dear Synod Fathers,

Many of us were young or taking our first steps in the religious life while the Second Vatican Council was drawing to a close. The final message of the Council Fathers was addressed to the youth of that time. That message which we ourselves heard in our youth will do us much good if we revisit it in our hearts with the help of the poet’s words: “May the man hold fast to what the child has promised” (Friedrich Hölderlin, Poems).

This is how the Council Fathers spoke to us: “For four years the Church has been working to rejuvenate her image in order to respond the better to the design of her Founder, the great Living One, the Christ who is eternally young. At the term of this imposing re-examination of life, she now turns to you. It is for you, youth, especially for you that the Church now comes through her council to enkindle your light, the light which illuminates the future, your future. The Church is anxious that this society that you are going to build up should respect the dignity, the liberty and the rights of individuals. These individuals are you. [...] She trusts [...] that you will express your faith in life and in what gives meaning to life: the certainty of the existence of a good and just God. It is in the name of this God and of His Son, Jesus, that we exhort you to open your hearts to the dimensions of the world, to heed the appeal of your brothers, to place your youthful energies at their service. Fight against all egoism. Refuse to give free course to the instincts of violence and hatred which beget wars and all
their train of miseries. Be generous, pure, respectful and sincere, and build, in enthusiasm, a better world than your elders had” (Paul VI, *Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Address to Young Men and Women of the World*, December 8, 1965).

Dear Synod Fathers, the Church looks to you with confidence and love.

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Homily at the Closing Mass of the Synod on Youth, Basilica of St. Peter (October 28, 2018)

The account we have just heard is the last of those that the evangelist Mark relates about the itinerant ministry of Jesus, who is about to enter Jerusalem to die and to rise. Bartimaeus is thus the last of those who follow Jesus along the way: from a beggar along the road to Jericho, he becomes a disciple who walks alongside the others on the way to Jerusalem. We too have walked alongside one another; we have been a “synod”. This Gospel seals three fundamental steps on the journey of faith.

First, let us consider Bartimaeus. His name means “son of Timaeus.” That is how the Gospel describes him: “Bartimaeus son of Timaeus” (Mk 10:46). Yet, oddly, his father is nowhere to be found. Bartimaeus lies alone on the roadside, far from home and fatherless. He is not loved, but abandoned. He is blind and no one listens to him; when he tried to speak, everyone told him to keep quiet. Jesus *hears his plea*. When he goes to him, he lets him speak. It was not hard to guess what Bartimaeus wanted: clearly, a blind person wants to see or regain his sight. But Jesus takes his time; he takes time to listen. This is the first step in helping the journey of faith: *listening*. It is the apostolate of the ear: listening before speaking.

Instead, many of those with Jesus ordered Bartimaeus to be quiet (cf. v. 48). For such disciples, a person in need was a nuisance along the way, an
obstacle unexpected and unforeseen. They preferred their own timetable above that of the Master, their own talking over listening to others. They were following Jesus, but they had their own plans in mind. This is a risk constantly to guard against. Yet, for Jesus, the cry of those pleading for help is not a nuisance but a challenge. How important it is for us to listen to life! The children of the heavenly Father are concerned with their brothers and sisters, not with useless chatter, but with the needs of their neighbours. They listen patiently and lovingly, just as God does to us and to our prayers, however repetitive they may be. God never grows tired; he is always happy when we seek him. May we too ask for the grace of a heart that listens. I would like to say to the young people, in the name of all of us adults: forgive us if often we have not listened to you, if, instead of opening our hearts, we have filled your ears. As Christ’s Church, we want to listen to you with love, certain of two things: that your lives are precious in God’s eyes, because God is young and loves young people, and that your lives are precious in our eyes too, and indeed necessary for moving forward.

After listening, a second step on the journey of faith is to be a neighbor. Let us look at Jesus: he does not delegate someone from the “large crowd” following him, but goes personally to meet Bartimaeus. He asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?” (v. 51). What do you want… —Jesus is completely taken up with Bartimaeus; he does not try to sidestep him. …me to do – not simply to speak, but to do something. …for you—not according to my own preconceived ideas, but for you, in your particular situation. That is how God operates. He gets personally involved with preferential love for every person. By his actions, he already communicates his message. Faith thus flowers in life.

Faith passes through life. When faith is concerned purely with doctrinal formulae, it risks speaking only to the head without touching the heart. And when it is concerned with activity alone, it risks turning into mere moralizing and social work. Faith, instead, is life: it is living in the love of God who has changed our lives. We cannot choose between doctrine and activism. We are called to carry out God’s work in God’s own way: in closeness, by cleaving to him, in communion with one another, alongside our brothers and sisters. Closeness: that is the secret to communicating the heart of the faith, and not a secondary aspect.
Being a neighbor means bringing the newness of God into the lives of our brothers and sisters. It serves as an antidote to the temptation of easy answers and fast fixes. Let us ask ourselves whether, as Christians, we are capable of becoming neighbors, stepping out of our circles and embracing those who are not “one of us,” those whom God ardently seeks. A temptation so often found in the Scriptures will always be there: the temptation to wash our hands. That is what the crowd does in today’s Gospel. It is what Cain did with Abel, and Pilate with Jesus: they washed their hands. But we want to imitate Jesus and, like him, to dirty our hands. He is the way (cf. Jn 14:6), who stopped on the road for Bartimaeus. He is the light of the world (cf. Jn 9:5), who bent down to help a blind man. Let us realize that the Lord has dirtied his hands for each one of us. Let us look at the cross, start from there and remember that God became my neighbor in sin and death. He became my neighbor: it all starts from there. And when, out of love of him, we too become neighbors, we become bringers of new life. Not teachers of everyone, not specialists in the sacred, but witnesses of the love that saves.

The third step is to bear witness. Let us consider the disciples who, at Jesus’ request, called out to Bartimaeus. They do not approach a beggar with a coin to shut him up, or to dispense advice. They go in Jesus’ name. Indeed, they say only three words to him, and all three are words of Jesus: “Take heart; get up, he is calling you” (v. 49). Everywhere else in the Gospel, Jesus alone says, “Take heart,” for he alone “heartens” those who heed him. In the Gospel, Jesus alone says, “Get up,” and heals in spirit and body. Jesus alone calls, transforming the lives of those who follow him, helping raise up the fallen, bringing God’s light to the darkness of life. So many children, so many young people, like Bartimaeus, are looking for light in their lives. They are looking for true love. And like Bartimaeus who in the midst of that large crowd called out to Jesus alone, they too seek life, but often find only empty promises and few people who really care.

It is not Christian to expect that our brothers and sisters who are seekers should have to knock on our doors; we ought to go out to them, bringing not ourselves but Jesus. He sends us, like those disciples, to encourage others and to raise them up in his name. He sends us forth to say to each person: “God is asking you to let yourself be loved by him.” How
often, instead of this liberating message of salvation, have we brought ourselves, our own “recipes” and “labels” into the Church! How often, instead of making the Lord’s words our own, have we peddled our own ideas as his word! How often do people feel the weight of our institutions more than the friendly presence of Jesus! In these cases, we act more like an NGO, a state-controlled agency, and not the community of the saved who dwell in the joy of the Lord.

To listen, to be a neighbor, to bear witness. The journey of faith in today’s Gospel ends in a beautiful and surprising way when Jesus says “Go; your faith has made you well” (v. 52). Yet Bartimaeus had made no profession of faith or done any good work; he had only begged for mercy. To feel oneself in need of salvation is the beginning of faith. It is the direct path to encountering Jesus. The faith that saved Bartimaeus did not have to do with his having clear ideas about God, but in his seeking him and longing to encounter him. Faith has to do with encounter, not theory. In encounter, Jesus passes by; in encounter, the heart of the Church beats. Then, not our preaching, but our witness of life will prove effective.

To all of you who have taken part in this “journey together,” I say “thank you” for your witness. We have worked in communion, with frankness and the desire to serve God’s people. May the Lord bless our steps, so that we can listen to young people, be their neighbors, and bear witness before them to Jesus, the joy of our lives.

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Homily at the Mass of Canonization of Paul VI and Oscar Arnulfo Romero, St. Peter's Square (October 14, 2018)

The second reading tells us that “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any twoedged sword (Heb 4:12). It really is: God’s word is not merely a set of truths or an edifying spiritual account; no – it is a living word that touches our lives, that transforms our lives. There, Jesus in person, the living Word of God, speaks to our hearts.

The Gospel, in particular, invites us to an encounter with the Lord, after the example of the “man” who “ran up to him” (cf. Mk 10:17). We can recognize ourselves in that man, whose name the text does not give, as if to suggest that he could represent each one of us. He asks Jesus how “to inherit eternal life.” He is seeking life without end, life in its fullness: who of us would not want this? Yet we notice that he asks for it as an inheritance, as a good to be obtained, to be won by his own efforts. In fact, in order to possess this good, he has observed the commandments from his youth and to achieve this he is prepared to follow others; and so he asks: “What must I do to have eternal life?”

Jesus's answer catches him off guard. The Lord looks upon him and loves him (cf. v. 21). Jesus changes the perspective: from commandments observed in order to obtain a reward, to a free and total love. That man was speaking in terms of supply and demand, Jesus proposes to him a story of love. He asks him to pass from the observance of laws to the gift of self, from doing for oneself to being with God. And the Lord suggests to the man a life that cuts to the quick: “Sell what you have and give to the poor… and come, follow me” (v. 21). To you, too, Jesus says: “Come, follow me!”

Come: do not stand still, because it is not enough not to do evil in order to be with Jesus. Follow me: do not walk behind Jesus only when you want to, but seek him out every day; do not be content to keep the commandments, to give a little alms and say a few prayers: find in Him the God who always loves you; seek in Jesus the God who is the meaning of your life, the God who gives you the strength to give of yourself.
Again Jesus says: “Sell what you have and give to the poor.” The Lord does not discuss theories of poverty and wealth, but goes directly to life. He asks you to leave behind what weighs down your heart, to empty yourself of goods in order to make room for him, the only good. We cannot truly follow Jesus when we are laden down with things. Because if our hearts are crowded with goods, there will not be room for the Lord, who will become just one thing among the others. For this reason, wealth is dangerous and —says Jesus— even makes one’s salvation difficult. Not because God is stern, no! The problem is on our part: our having too much, our wanting too much suffocates us, suffocates our hearts and makes us incapable of loving. Therefore, Saint Paul writes that “the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim 6:10). We see this where money is at the center, there is no room for God nor for man.

Jesus is radical. He gives all and he asks all: he gives a love that is total and asks for an undivided heart. Even today he gives himself to us as the living bread; can we give him crumbs in exchange? We cannot respond to him, who made himself our servant even going to the cross for us, only by observing some of the commandments. We cannot give him, who offers us eternal life, some odd moment of time. Jesus is not content with a “percentage of love”: we cannot love him twenty or fifty or sixty percent. It is either all or nothing.

Dear brothers and sisters, our heart is like a magnet: it lets itself be attracted by love, but it can cling to one master only and it must choose: either it will love God or it will love the world’s treasure (cf. Mt 6:24); either it will live for love or it will live for itself (cf. Mk 8:35). Let us ask ourselves where we are in our story of love with God. Do we content ourselves with a few commandments or do we follow Jesus as lovers, really prepared to leave behind something for him? Jesus asks each of us and all of us as the Church journeying forward: are we a Church that only preaches good commandments or a Church that is a spouse, that launches herself forward in love for her Lord? Do we truly follow him or do we revert to the ways of the world, like that man in the Gospel? In a word, is Jesus enough for us or do we look for many worldly securities? Let us ask for the grace always to leave things behind for love of the Lord: to leave behind wealth, leave behind the yearning for status and power, leave behind structures that
are no longer adequate for proclaiming the Gospel, those weights that slow down our mission, the strings that tie us to the world. Without a leap forward in love, our life and our Church become sick from “complacency and self-indulgence” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 95): we find joy in some fleeting pleasure, we close ourselves off in useless gossip, we settle into the monotony of a Christian life without momentum, where a little narcissism covers over the sadness of remaining unfulfilled.

This is how it was for the man, who —the Gospel tells us— “went away sorrowful” (v. 22). He was tied down to regulations of the law and to his many possessions; he had not given over his heart. Even though he had encountered Jesus and received his loving gaze, the man went away sad. Sadness is the proof of unfulfilled love, the sign of a lukewarm heart. On the other hand, a heart unburdened by possessions, that freely loves the Lord, always spreads joy, that joy for which there is so much need today. Pope Saint Paul VI wrote: “It is indeed in the midst of their distress that our fellow men need to know joy, to hear its song” (*Gaudete in Domino*, I).

Today Jesus invites us to return to the source of joy, which is the encounter with him, the courageous choice to risk everything to follow him, the satisfaction of leaving something behind in order to embrace his way. The saints have travelled this path.

Paul VI did too, after the example of the Apostle whose name he took. Like him, Paul VI spent his life for Christ’s Gospel, crossing new boundaries and becoming its witness in proclamation and in dialogue, a prophet of a Church turned outwards, looking to those far away and taking care of the poor. Even in the midst of tiredness and misunderstanding, Paul VI bore witness in a passionate way to the beauty and the joy of following Christ totally. Today he still urges us, together with the Council whose wise helmsman he was, to live our common vocation: the universal call to holiness. Not to half measures, but to holiness. It is wonderful that together with him and the other new saints today, there is Archbishop Romero, who left the security of the world, even his own safety, in order to give his life according to the Gospel, close to the poor and to his people, with a heart drawn to Jesus and his brothers and sisters. We can say the same about Francesco Spinelli, Vincenzo Romano, Maria Caterina Kasper, Nazaria Ignazia of Saint Teresa of Jesus, and also our Abruzzese–Neapolitan young
man, Nunzio Sulprizio: the saintly, courageous, humble young man who encountered Jesus in his suffering, in silence and in the offering of himself. All these saints, in different contexts, put today’s word into practice in their lives, without lukewarmness, without calculation, with the passion to risk everything and to leave it all behind. Brothers and sisters, may the Lord help us to imitate their example.

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FROM THE PRELATE

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Activities

Pastoral Trips: Covadonga (Spain), Nigeria, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Marian Family Day, Campus Bio-medico, Granada

Pastoral Trips

*Covadonga (Spain), July 13*

Invited by Archbishop Jesús Sanz Montes of Oviedo, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Covadonga to take part in the Jubilee Year of the Coronation of Our Lady. During this day he prayed before Our Lady in the Holy Cave and concelebrated the Mass with the archbishop and Don Adolfo Mariño, abbot of Covadonga. In the Holy Cave, the heart of the sanctuary, the archbishop welcomed the Prelate and led the praying of the Angelus. After thanking him for his words, Monsignor Ocáriz asked for prayers for the Church and for the intentions of Pope Francis. *La Santina*, as the statue of Our Lady of Covadonga is popularly known, was dressed in a mantle donated by the families of the Cares Association of Oviedo.

About forty priests concelebrated the Eucharist, including the abbot, the vicar general of the diocese, Jorge Fernández Sangrador, the Regional Vicar of the Prelature, Ramon Herrando, several episcopal vicars, the canons of Covadonga, and priests from various parts of the diocese. The Harmonia Choir from Gijón took part in the ceremony, which concluded with the Hymn of Covadonga.

In his words of welcome, the archbishop expressed his gratitude for the apostolic work of Opus Dei in the diocese. He said this work is carried out “with true availability and sincere dedication in so many areas: education, teaching, apostolate, families, professional work. All this takes place in the midst of daily life, sanctifying work as an unfinished work of God that He wants to entrust to our small hands.”

During his homily, the Prelate of Opus Dei stressed his joy at kneeling before *La Santina* and encouraged those present to pray for the fruit of the
upcoming synod on youth, faith and vocational discernment, so that many young people may know the joy of dedicating their lives to God and to other men and women.

Monsignor Ocáriz referred to La Santina as the “all-powerful intercessor,” “the woman of the yes,” the “cause of our joy” and “believer par excellence,” with “a faith that urges us to go out to meet others,” with a joy that “is experienced by generous people who are attentive to the needs of others.”

He also said that his pilgrimage follows “in the footsteps left by so many pilgrims who throughout the centuries have come here to seek consolation.” He mentioned the visits to La Santina by St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II, as well as those of St. Josemaría, Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, and Bishop Javier Echevarría. He also made special reference to St. Pedro Poveda, who between 1905 and 1913 had stayed in Covadonga, where the Teresian Association came to birth.

Through September 8th, Covadonga is celebrating the centennial of the Coronation of Our Lady, whose statue is venerated in the Holy Cave, very close to the basilica inaugurated in 1901. Thousands of pilgrims come to pray before La Santina with the invocation “Mother and Queen,” the motto of this Jubilee.

_Nigeria, July 20–26_

During the days spent in the west African country, the Prelate of Opus Dei greeted numerous faithful and friends of the Prelature. Opus Dei’s apostolic work in Nigeria began in 1965. The previous Prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarría, visited the country in 1999.

On the 20th, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz met with faithful of the Prelature and shared with them the joy of seeing them “in a land of great possibilities,” with the wealth of its more than 170 million people. Among other topics, he encouraged them to cultivate a deep friendship with others by loving very much their freedom. One expression of this love for freedom, he said, is the need to actively listen to others.

In the context of the preparation for the next Synod of Bishops, Msgr. Ocáriz recalled that all men and women have a vocation, even those who,
for the moment, have not received the gift of faith. “God does not abandon anyone,” he insisted. “The question that must be asked is not so much whether I have a vocation, but what is the call that God is addressing to me.”

On Saturday, July 21, the Prelate spoke with some of the Prelature's faithful and friends at Lagoon School Lekki, and Lagos Business School. People came to see him from various cities including Lagos, Ibadan, Iloti, Nsukka, Enugu, Benin and Abuja.

When asked about the value of work in the home, Msgr. Ocáriz said that the beauty and order in the atmosphere at home helps people to develop a healthy emotional life. This work, he said, “leaves a lasting mark on people,” adding that “domestic work is the backbone supporting the family environment in Opus Dei.”

In view of the economic hardships the country is going through, a situation that is causing many people to emigrate, the Prelate advised working as well as possible to further the common good. He also pointed out that each country faces its own challenges and needs to seek the appropriate solutions.

Throughout the day, the Prelate received a number of families. Some had travelled from places as distant as Benin City.

On Sunday, July 22, Msgr. Ocáriz greeted those responsible for some educational initiatives, including Whitesands School and Ikota Educational Foundation. He then had a get-together with faithful of the Prelature at Lagos Business School. In view of the upcoming synod on vocation and discernment, one of the questions was how to help parents understand the vocation of their children. The Prelate used the apostle John as an example of how young people can have sufficient supernatural and human maturity to make a commitment. Maturity does not depend on age, but comes from being close to God.

In a meeting with young girls held at Lagoon School, the Prelate encouraged them to strive to come close to Christ and become apostles. “We do not follow only a beautiful teaching or an ideal, but a Person who is very close to us in the Holy Eucharist.” Throughout the various meetings, he asked all those present to pray frequently for the Pope and for
the Church, especially at Mass.

On Monday, July 23, Msgr. Ocáriz visited the campus of the Pan-Atlantic University. There he blessed a new shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Help and encouraged those present to have great devotion to our Lady, presenting their needs to her.

The Prelate toured the university facilities and met with those in charge of the academic center. “When people are formed humanly, professionally and spiritually; when they are taught to be concerned about the problems of society, to work and to reflect, this has repercussions on the various aspects of their lives and contributes to the common good,” he said.

Before leaving the university, he visited the Eleko University Center, a residence hall for men, and blessed the Aster Hall residence for women, which is still under construction. As a memento of his visit, he planted a tree at both sites.

His next destination was the Iroto Conference Center in Ogun State. People from neighboring villages welcomed him, dancing and singing the Ekabo, which means “the Yoruba welcome you.”

On the sixth day of his pastoral trip, Msgr Fernando Ocáriz went to Enugu. There he met with a group of diocesan priests and seminarians. He spoke with them about the beauty of their priestly vocation and their responsibility to carry out the mission that God has entrusted to them.

He then went to the Niger Foundation Hospital (NFH), a health center under the spiritual care of priests of Opus Dei. Later the Prelate had two meetings with faithful of Opus Dei at The Base conference center.

On July 25, Msgr. Ocáriz visited the Institute for Industrial Technology (IIT), a social work that provides technical skills for young people without many resources for obtaining an education. The IIT was established in 2002 on the occasion of the centennial of St. Josemaría’s birth.

Afterwards Msgr. Ocáriz went to pray at the Ikoyi cemetery, where some of the Prelature’s faithful are buried.
July 26 was the last day of his pastoral visit to Nigeria. In the morning he was received by Archbishop Alfred Adewale Martins of Lagos. On the way, the Prelate stopped at the Catholic Cathedral of Lagos, where he prayed for a few minutes before the Blessed Sacrament.

In the afternoon, he met for the final time with some of the faithful of the Prelature. One of those present asked him what message he would like to leave them. Msgr. Ocáriz proposed three ideas to them: the need to make Jesus Christ the center of one’s interior life, care for fraternal charity that is shown in unity with others, and the value of freedom. At the end, he imparted his blessing to all those present.

Argentina, August 2–8

On the morning of August 3, Msgr. Ocáriz arrived in Argentina after his flight from Madrid. He was received by Father Victor Urrestarazu, the regional vicar, along with some families and other friends. Some of the first members of the Work in Argentina were waiting for him in the La Chacra Conference Center.

At the La Chacra Center for Study and Work he met with university women from Venezuela, Bolivia, Paraguay, and various cities in Argentina. Among other topics, the Prelate of Opus Dei invited everyone to pray for the difficult situations in Venezuela and Nicaragua, as Pope Francis has requested.

On August 4, he had several get-togethers in the Parque Norte auditorium with faithful and friends of Opus Dei. The topic of the family came up several times. After one question, Msgr. Ocáriz recommended that they start smiling at the door of their homes before entering. “Even if you are alone. Sometimes smiling requires effort, because we are worried or tired. You may arrive home exhausted and perhaps don’t have the strength to say much. But if you smile, that alone helps. It not only helps your wife and children, but also yourself.”

In the afternoon, the Prelate returned to Parque Norte to speak with faithful of the Work and cooperators. At the start, he encouraged people to pray a lot for the Pope, “and not only because he is Argentinean,” he said, “but because he is the Pope, the Vicar of Christ for the whole Church. And because he needs and asks us to, since he has great faith in the effectiveness
of everyone’s prayers.”

Recalling a question put to St. Josemaria in 1974, one of those present asked him to leave a message for all Argentinians. Echoing the response of the founder of Opus Dei, his successor said: “That you love one another, that you understand one another, that you know how to forgive one another if necessary. This is not a question of sentimentality, but of a real concern for others. And how is this possible? Through Jesus Christ, by seeing Jesus in others.”

Sunday, August 5, was a day for meeting with young people. At mid-morning, in the Buen Ayre School, hundreds of young women from different provinces of Argentina and other countries were waiting for him. In response to a question about the temptation of activism in our life, the Prelate advised them “to look at Jesus in the Tabernacle. Look at him with a look of faith, knowing that He is there for you. Dedicate part of your prayer to saying nothing: listen by looking.”

In the afternoon, promoters of initiatives dedicated to the formation and accompaniment of families spoke with the Prelate, who encouraged them to continue with this important mission.

Later, he met with a large group of young men. One of those present asked how to put into practice Pope Francis’s invitation to find Jesus in friends, companions, and especially in the most needy. The Prelate invited him to always have an “interior attitude of being open to others’ needs.” He recalled that the Pope had advised him in an audience that “Opus Dei should carry out a work of evangelization especially in the ‘peripheries’ of the middle class.” And he continued: “there is a material ‘periphery,’ and also a spiritual one. We have to help people with material needs as much as possible, and also learn from them.”

On August 6, Msgr. Ocáriz visited Cardinal Poli in his Buenos Aires residence. Afterwards he went to Barracas to greet the educational communities of the Cruz del Sur and Buen Consejo schools and of the Association for Social, Educational, and Health Enterprises. These schools are carrying out an educational plan of social inclusion, in close contact with the students’ families. Buen Consejo recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. Pope Francis sent a letter of congratulations through the
chaplain, Father Pedro Velasco Suárez. Years ago, the then Cardinal Bergoglio blessed an image of Mary Most Holy at the school, which the students now gave to the Prelate. Msgr. Ocáriz in turn gave them a relic of St. Josemaría to put in the chapel.

In the afternoon, he went to the nunciature for a meeting with the apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Léon Kalenga Badikebele, who arrived in the country last June.

Finally, on the Feast of the Transfiguration he celebrated the Eucharist together with other priests, in the parish of St. Benedict in Buenos Aires’ Palermo district.

On August 7, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz went to Austral University. He visited the hospital, the graduate school building, and also the business school. There he met briefly with all the academic staff at the university.

At the end of his visit, the Prelate received the diploma of Honorary Rector of Austral University, a title that had been conferred on him by the University’s Board of Directors in March 2017.

In the evening, some 20 families from Buenos Aires had the opportunity to share a few moments with Msgr. Ocáriz at La Chacra.

On his last day in Argentina, August 8, the Prelate said good-bye to our Lady of Lujan, as St. Josemaría had done 44 years earlier. Before entering the basilica, he greeted a group of women carrying out the Marangatú Workshops, an initiative for the integral development of women and their families.

He also greeted the authorities of the Marzano Foundation, an institution that since 1974 has promoted rural development and social inclusion in various schools. He congratulated them on a new project launched in Luján: the “Los Aromos” training center.

In the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján, Msgr. Ocáriz prayed for a few minutes and said the Hail Holy Queen before the image of the Blessed Mother. Then he went to one of the side chapels where a statue of St. Josemaría was installed in 2009.

In the visitor’s book, the Prelate wrote: “With the joy of having prayed in this holy place to our Lady of Luján, following in the footsteps of Saint
Josemaría, I entrust my intentions to the intercession of Mary, praying for the whole of the Argentinean nation.”

**Bolivia, August 8 to 13**

The Prelate of Opus Dei set foot on Bolivian soil on August 8th in the afternoon. He arrived at the airport of El Alto, at an altitude of 13,000 feet, late in the day. There he greeted Father Marcelo Rojo, the vicar of Opus Dei in that country and some of the faithful of the Work. He then went to Río Abajo, a conference center where he will stay during his pastoral trip. The Prelate gave special thanks for the work of the women who take care of the center’s domestic services, and encouraged all of them to strive to stay close to God, overcoming the difficulties.

In Río Abajo he met with Archbishop Edmundo Abastoflor of La Paz; the Auxiliary Bishop and Secretary of the Episcopal Conference, Aurelio Pesoa; and the Military Bishop Fernando Bascopé. At the end, a photograph was taken.

The Prelate also met with a group of students from La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz who told him some anecdotes and asked several questions about the relationship between science and faith, the determination to move the country forward, sincerity in taking advantage of time, and generosity in helping others. In the evening a number of families came to greet him.

On August 11, he had get-togethers with several groups of people. In the first, Msgr. Ocáriz commented on the Gospel of the day: “Faith moves mountains; nothing is impossible for those who have faith. Therefore we have to be people with great faith, with great trust in God. Trusting that God has chosen us as we are.” And he concluded: “This also means that we should always be very happy, despite the difficulties.”

In the afternoon he met with a group of young girls in *La Casita*. In the garden they danced a Bolivian “cueca” for him, dressed in the typical costumes of La Paz, Cochabamba, Potosi, Tarija and Chuquisaca.

The afternoon get-together in Río Abajo began with a welcome in Quechua, recalling the 40 years since the beginning of Opus Dei’s apostolic work in Bolivia.
In his answers to various questions, the Prelate often stressed that “for everything, first of all prayer.” And he insisted: “we are not following a life project; we are following Someone, Jesus.” Finally, as on other occasions during this pastoral trip, he stressed the importance for the Church of the apostolic work with families.

On August 12, he visited some centers and several educational and social initiatives run by faithful of the Work, cooperators, and friends.

In the morning, waiting for him at the Hontanar Club were a group of girls who attend the apostolic activities in this center. He then went to Horizontes School, where he had a brief meeting with teachers and administrative personnel. Msgr. Ocáriz reminded them of the importance of the work of human and Christian formation that they carry out there.

The morning concluded with the concelebration of Sunday Mass in the sports center of the Cumbre School. Previously he had met with all the employees. Several families did the readings and brought up the offerings. In his homily on the Gospel of the day, he stressed that in the Eucharist we find the strength to sanctify ordinary life.

After lunch at the Huayna Club, he gave a brief talk, and some Peruvian boys carrying out a solidarity project also spoke. Afterwards, he went to CEFIM, a cooking and hospitality school that helps women to improve their work opportunities.

At CEFIM, the Prelate talked with the directors, teachers, students and other people who assist this project, and got to know the facilities in detail. As he toured the building, he met some of the students and several of them asked him to bless their hands, their “instruments” of work. He also met with some of the young women in Illawa, the residence attached to CEFIM.

From there he went to Thaki, where many families and a group of cooperators from Cochabamba had the opportunity to greet him. They took photos, asked several questions and requested prayers for particular intentions.

The day ended in Rio Abajo and a final meeting in La Casita. The Prelate expressed his gratitude for all the small signs of affection and care
shown him during these days.

The last part of Msgr. Ocáriz’s stay in Bolivia took place in Santa Cruz, with two get-togethers in the airport waiting room with the people of the Work and other friends (due to the cancellation of a flight he was unable to visit the centers in that city). The Prelate told them that “apostolate means loving people.” He answered some questions about the family and the education of children, social advancement and prayer. At the end, he was given a “camba” sombrero and he imparted his blessing to everyone.

Paraguay, August 13th to 16th

Msgr. Ocáriz landed in Asunción on August 13. A number of families were waiting for him in the reception room at the airport. Afterwards, the Prelate went to La Cumbre conference center, where he would be staying in Paraguay. He greeted a group of women who received him with strong applause and the typical local greeting “Mbaéichapa Padre” — How are you, Father!

On August 14th, the Prelate went to visit the new site of the Buenafuente School. At noon, he received several families from Encarnación, Ciudad del Este and Asunción. After lunch, he went to the Colonial House to have a get-together with women of the Work from various cities including Asunción, Ciudad del Este and Encarnación. A small group also came from Posadas (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay). Later, he returned to La Cumbre to greet more families and then to meet with students.

The visit to Laguna Grande School had a special moment, when the students gave him tereré, a traditional local beverage, in the same guampa (a drinking cup made from a bull's horn) that Pope Francis had used.

At 7:00 p.m., San Cristóbal Parish was overflowing with people because of the double joy of celebrating the Feast of the Assumption, patroness of the city, and participating in the Eucharistic concelebration presided over by Msgr. Ocáriz. Accompanying him were the priests Victor Urrestarazu, Andrej Rant, Jorge Gisbert, Luis Aguirre, Federico Mernes, and Juan Carlos Alegre.
One of the Mass intentions was to pray for Bishop Rogelio Livieres, on the third anniversary of his death, the first priest of the Work born in Paraguay and Bishop Emeritus of Ciudad del Este.

In the homily, he stressed the tie between the Feast of the Assumption and the history of the city. He said that “the Assumption brings the Blessed Mother closer to us; she is now so closely united to God that she is able to listen to us and be present with each and every one of us.” Finally he reminded them the importance of service: “In the Gospel that we have just heard, the first thing Mary does is to think of her cousin, and set out quickly, in a hurry, to stay for months helping her.”

Afterwards he had dinner with priests who are members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

On August 15, the Prelate celebrated the Mass of the Assumption of our Lady in the oratory of La Cumbrera. It was the 47th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

In the middle of the morning, he met with a group of women in the Mariscal Lopez Convention Center. In answering their questions, Msgr. Ocáriz dealt with various topics including love and fidelity in marriage, order and diligence. One of the first women who arrived in Paraguay to begin the Work’s apostolic activities presented him, on behalf of everyone, with a chalice made in the typical Paraguayan liturgical style.

Later Msgr. Ocáriz visited Las Almenas School to bless the new oratory. He greeted the director of the school, the authorities and the founding families. Then he unveiled a commemorative plaque that recalls that this oratory, dedicated to the Holy Family, was built through the efforts of the families and former students of the school.

On the 16th, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz began his last day in Paraguay by preaching to a group of faithful of the Prelature in the oratory of La Cumbrera. He spoke to them about fraternity, knowing how to forgive others, and service. He cited the teaching of St. Josemaría that “charity, more than in giving, consists in understanding,” and encouraged them to be attentive to the needs of others.
Then he went to the apostolic nunciature to visit Bishop Eliseo Ariotti, the nuncio in Paraguay. This cordial encounter was followed by a visit to Archbishop Edmundo Valenzuela of Asuncion, in the archbishop's residence near the metropolitan cathedral. Among other topics, they spoke about the recent beatification of “Chiquitunga,” the first Paraguayan woman to be proclaimed blessed and whose devotion is wide-spread in the country.

Afterwards, the Prelate of Opus Dei visited Campoalto School, an educational facility inspired by the teachings of St. Josemaría.

After greeting a group of mothers there, he went to the center of the patio, where hundreds of students were waiting for him. Msgr. Ocáriz thanked them for their warm welcome and encouraged them to be good students and good friends, and to strive to draw ever closer to Jesus. At midday he received a number of families at the Villa Morra cultural center.

**Marian Family Day, Torreciudad (Spain), September 1**

The Prelate of Opus Dei presided over the 28th edition of the Marian Family Day at the Shrine of Torreciudad. 16,000 people from all over Spain took part.

Msgr. Ocáriz concelebrated the Eucharist, placing at the feet of our Lady the petitions of the families for the new school year. With words of Pope Francis, he reminded them that “many families, who are far from considering themselves perfect, live with love, fulfil their calling and keep going forward, even if they fall many times along the way.”

He also urged the families to be aware of the great good they do when they strive to be a school of communion, forgiveness and solidarity, “through small gestures of goodness,” as the Pope said at the World Meeting of Families recently held in Dublin. This applies to every home in the challenges arising from scarcity of resources, raising children, living in harmony. “God will give us the strength needed to turn these into opportunities to grow as a family, to find in these small or great challenges a way to be more united, because they are confronted by everyone with love.” Addressing the parents who filled the esplanade, Msgr. Ocáriz said that “there is no need to wait until everything is going perfectly in your own home,” and asked them “to be united in sharing your joyful and hope-filled
vision of the family.”

200 volunteers helped out in the organization of the Marian Day. Among the local authorities present there was Laura Puyal, mayor of El Grado, who said she was happy to “share in this festival, which is a commitment to the family and to values that are a patrimony of all mankind that help us to overcome individualism. Moreover, it contributes to making our region and our villages better known.”

Campus Bio-Medico, Rome (Italy), October 3

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz visited the Campus Bio-Medico University in Rome and met with the center's personnel. Doctors, nurses, administrative personnel and professors spoke with Msgr. Ocáriz about various topics, including the meaning of suffering and the conflict that can arise between family life and professional dedication.

The meeting with the staff was preceded by greetings to the Prelate extended by the president of the Campus Bio-Medico, Felice Barela, and the rector Rafael Calabrò. The president recalled Blessed Alvaro del Portillo's homily during the Campus' inaugural Mass, and stressed the desire to return “to the roots” of this initiative, which was born under the impetus of St. Josemaría's first successor. The rector in turn referred to the get-together with the Prelate as the reunion of “a family which wants to look to the future together with its father.” He also reminded people that the main goal of the formation given at the Campus Bio-Medico is to help develop “experts in humanity,” according to the well-known expression of St. John Paul II.

The Prelate began by speaking about Bishop Javier Echevarría, who spent the last days of his earthly life at the Campus Bio-Medico. He then made reference to some key elements of a university's mission as “a place where culture is at the service to the person and not a pretext for self-affirmation or the exercise of power,” and where “scientific progress and human progress can grow side by side without harmful conflicts.”

Speaking about professional work, the Prelate invited them to cultivate a strong optimism, basing it “on small, specific gains that you recognize in your daily work: the satisfaction that, as students, you notice when you
finish a class that opens up new horizons for you, or that, as teachers, you notice when you see that the knowledge transmitted has been well understood.” Msgr. Ocáriz ended his opening words by expressing his desire that “at the Campus Bio-Medico University in Rome, science and service, competence and generosity, faith and geometry, may walk together,” and reminded them that, as St. Josemaría said, “it is love that makes small things great.”

The Prelate then responded to various questions. Several of these referred to working in a hospital. One person asked: How can we transmit bad news to the relatives of the patients? He said that one important thing is to “love the people” to whom we have to give this kind of news, trying to “make present our love and affection for them, trusting in God’s help. While also realizing the risk of “hurting others with our words,” even when we want the true good of the other person.

Other questions referred to the difficulty of reconciling work and dedication to one’s family. Msgr. Ocáriz’s advice was twofold. On the one hand we need to cultivate an order in which “the family comes before work,” and on the other, “to try not to get nervous if at the end of the day we have not achieved all the tasks” that we had set for ourselves.

Granada (Spain), 23–26 November

Msgr. Ocáriz landed on the 23rd at the Federico García Lorca airport. A few meters from the landing strip, some families were waiting for him and gave him a bouquet of roses.

The Prelate’s first stop was the Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows, the patroness of Granada. The pastor of the church, Fr. Blas Gordo, greeted Monsignor Ocáriz and joined him in praying before an image of Mary that the people of Granada have venerated since the arrival of the Catholic Monarchs in the 15th century. The Prelate thus was following in the footsteps of Saint Josemaría and of the former Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, who visited Granada in 1996 and 2002.

On Saturday November 24th, the sky cleared over Granada and the sun shone brightly over the snowy peaks of the nearby Sierra Nevada. With this landscape as a backdrop, the Prelate of Opus Dei made his way to the Monaita-Mulhacén School for a series of encounters with families and
members of the Work from Granada and its neighboring cities of Málaga, Almería, Jaén and Melilla.

Before the morning get-togethers, Msgr. Ocáriz greeted the directors of Attendis, an educational enterprise that runs 21 schools in Andalusia and Extremadura. These schools foster close collaboration between teachers and parents, inspired by the message of St. Josemaría. Sandra Pérez, the general director, presented him with a plaque as a souvenir. He then greeted the people who take care of the cleaning and the cafeteria at the school, assuring them that their work has a very direct educational impact on the students, and is therefore "just as important, or even more so, than that of the teachers."

That same morning, Monsignor Ocáriz also had a get-together with over 1,400 people in the sports pavillion at the Monaita-Mulhacén school. At the beginning, the Prelate recalled the visits made to Granada by Bishop Javier Echevarría, and he encouraged those present to make themselves available to fulfill God's will, being open to all men and women, with a universal outlook. As an example, he spoke about the life of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, a woman of Opus Dei who was to be beatified next May 18. He also asked them to pray for the Pope.

The Prelate of Opus Dei also held an encounter with diocesan priests who participate in the activities carried out by the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in the eastern area of Andalusia.

In the afternoon, another gathering was held in Monaita-Mulhacén with people from all over Andalusia. The Prelate reminded them that holiness is God's plan for each one of us, which doesn't mean a material perfection or trying to become people without defects, but rather the fullness of love, which leads us to give ourselves to God and to others.

He again referred to the example of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, recalling her willingness to "do whatever God wanted," whether it was going to Mexico or living in Rome or taking responsibility for the domestic administration of Opus Dei centers. "We have to help strengthen freedom," Monsignor Ocáriz told those present, explaining that this is possible when we do everything "because we want to, putting love for God into it. When we feel free and act out of love is when we are truly happy."
In response to a question about how to stay close to God when using the social media and the internet, Bishop Ocariz recalled that St. Josemaría discovered the depth of God's presence in the middle of the city, on a streetcar, and he recommended taking special care of our encounters with God, especially in the Holy Mass. He said that these moments are like radiators that help us keep the warmth of God's presence all throughout the day.

The last day of Monsignor Ocáriz's pastoral visit to Granada, November 25th, coincided with the celebration of the Feast of Christ the King. The Prelate spoke with various groups of young people, reminding them that Christ reigns by respecting the freedom of each person.

At mid-morning, he went to the El Soto Professional Training Center, located in the town of Chauchina, in the farming district of Granada. The center has offered middle and higher education courses for over 40 years.

This school was born as an association of families, with the aim of improving the living and working conditions of the local people in this rural area. Msgr. Ocáriz expressed his gratitude for their work, which contributes to making St. Josemaría’s dream come true: putting Christ at the summit of all human activities. He reminded them that agriculture is an important activity for society, and that the joy of the Gospel should be found there too.

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Prelate's Homily at the Shrine of Covadonga, Spain (July 13, 2018)

We have just heard in the first reading: “O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice”
(Song of Songs 2:14). These words reflect very well our desire as Christians when we go on a pilgrimage to visit Mary. We come to her House looking for her face, to listen to her voice, because she is our Mother. Mary responds to our supplication as the beloved in the Song of Songs: “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away” (2:13). I am your Mother, at my side you will be well, I will comfort you, and my presence will fill you with peace.

I am very grateful to the Archbishop for his invitation to come to Covadonga and to the Abbot for his welcome on the occasion of the Marian Jubilee Year, which allows me to kneel today—as St. Josemaría repeatedly did—before the Santina, as you affectionately call her in this land.

For centuries the cave of Our Lady has been surrounded by the love of the Asturians and of so many people from all over the world who come here to greet their Mother. Thousands of pilgrims have come in these jubilee months to pray before the “Mother and Queen of our mountain,” as the Hymn to Our Lady of Covadonga says. The Blessed Virgin is the all-powerful intercessor, and never ceases entreatying for her children. Let us thank our Lord for the fruits of this Jubilee Year. Many people have come here seeking forgiveness and protection and have returned to their homes with a renewed heart. How many times have we experienced that “We go to Jesus—and we ‘return’ to him—through Mary,” as St. Josemaría liked to repeat!

As we have read in the Gospel of the Mass, after the angel’s visit Mary leaves Nazareth to go to the hill country of Judea. She wants to help her cousin Elizabeth, who is in the last months of her pregnancy. Mary does not think about herself, even though she is also waiting for a Son, the Son of God. St. Luke’s description of the encounter between the two cousins places us in a scene of blessing and joy. Even John the Baptist leaps for joy in his mother’s womb as he feels the closeness of the Savior. This is the joy of having and carrying Christ with us. It is the happiness enjoyed by generous people who are attentive to the needs of others. It is the joy that overflows in hearts that shelter a “fairest love.”
Mary hurries to the aid of her cousin, without delays or doubts, without hesitating. This movement of her heart makes clear—as Pope Francis says—that she “is the woman who says ‘yes,’ a ‘yes’ of surrender to God and, at the same time, a ‘yes’ of surrender to her brothers and sisters. This is the ‘yes’ which prompted her to give the best of herself, going forth to meet the others.”

The Magnificat is Mary’s response to Elizabeth’s greeting. It is a song of joy and praise woven from words of Scripture, in which her heart overflows in gratitude and surprise in the face of so many gifts from Heaven. She is filled with happiness because of her vocation and wants to spread happiness to her children. Hence, we call her Cause of our joy. When we encounter Mary, we recover our confidence, if we have lost it. At her side our hope is strengthened and our love is kindled. When our Lady is present in our day, our interior climate changes along with the environment in our family or in our workplace: we see things differently.

Elizabeth says with enthusiasm: “Blessed are you who have believed” (Lk 1:45). Mary is the believer par excellence. She is the first in the long chain of those who believe in Jesus Christ. We can and must learn from their faith. This is a faith that allows us to see “the greatness of the Lord” (Lk 1:46). It gives us certitude and an outlook of hope that fills our life with joy in God, despite the difficulties. It is a faith that impels us to go out to meet others.

The Virgin of Covadonga carries the Child in her left arm. She always puts Jesus before our eyes, lifts him up, and wants to bring us to him. She did this with the apostles, and now she also does so with us. We come here following the footsteps of so many pilgrims who, over the centuries, have come to seek consolation in the “Holy Cave.” Saint John Paul II and Saint John XXIII came to Covadonga. And how can we fail to recall that here in front of the Santina Saint Pedro Poveda first conceived of the ideal of the Teresian Association? Naturally, I am particularly happy to remember the visits of Saint Josemaría, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, and Bishop Javier Echevarría.

The last time Don Javier was in Asturias, in 2008 on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of the Cross of the Angels and of the Victory Cross, he
visited the Holy Cave. There he said some words that can help us today to pray for the fruits of the upcoming Synod on faith and the vocational discernment of young people, so that they might feel the joy of dedicating their lives to God and to others. “The greatest reason for our life,” he said, “is to find Jesus Christ, to follow him very closely, to befriend him and to make him known. If we want to find a shortcut to lead us safely to this one path which is Our Lord Jesus Christ, we should turn to Mary.”

Thank you, Mother, because you always come quickly to our aid; because you teach us to make God great in our souls, with a generous faith. Thank you because with you the Holy Spirit always comes with his gifts and fruits. Thank you because close to you we learn what deep happiness truly is, to feel loved, to feel like a beloved son or daughter. Thank you because God does great things for you. Teach us to live the Gospel with joy and to give authentic witness with our Christian life.

Amen.

A Homily at the Opening of the Academic Year, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (October 8, 2018)

As we do every year, we begin this new academic year with the Mass of the Holy Spirit. Our invocation to the Paraclete almost coincides this year with that of the Holy Father and the members of the Synod dedicated to youth, faith and vocational discernment. These topics of the Synod have a great relevance for today’s world. We all share the same desire to transmit to young people the beauty of our faith, without ignoring the difficulties of this apostolic effort. So it is easy for us to unite our petition for help from the Holy Spirit with that of the Holy Father and of the whole Church for the Synod’s outcome. In the end, the reason why you are here in Rome as students, professors, or employees of a pontifical university is to put your study, your work, your abilities at the service of spreading the faith. In many cases it was precisely the discernment of your vocation that led you to
Rome to dedicate your best efforts to this task. This happy coincidence should help you remember the importance of your stay in Rome and lead you to beseech the Holy Spirit to make you docile instruments of his action in the Church and in the world.

If we ask ourselves why we began the academic year in this way (that is, with the Mass of the Holy Spirit) we can easily understand why this recourse to the Paraclete does not refer only to the intellectual dimension of our work. We are not only asking for his help, which would in itself be a lot, to deepen in our knowledge of the faith, to form our intelligence, to study the academic subjects with profit. We turn to Him to lead us, as Jesus promised, into “all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak” (Jn 16:13). And “all the truth,” besides a theoretical dimension, so to speak, also has a practical dimension. The Holy Spirit not only illumines our intellect. He configures our life in all its dimensions, our thinking and acting, our intellect and our will, our soul and our body, our whole person. Each of us, therefore, needs to let ourselves be guided by Him, making Paul’s invitation our own, walking according to the Spirit in order to reach all truth, to reach Christ himself. As Saint Josemaría wrote: “Our Lord Jesus wants it: we have to follow Him closely. There is no other way. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in each soul, in yours too. You have to be docile, so as not to put obstacles in the way of your God” (The Forge, 860).

Hence at the beginning of a new academic year it is very important for students to realize that the goal is not only to be able to pass the exams, to learn many things, to delve into the various disciplines. The goal is always identification with Christ, holiness. This is our vocation, that of every Christian, configured in accord with the different charisms that the Spirit inspires in the Church. It is so clear that invoking the Holy Spirit involves everyone, not only the students and professors, but everyone who works at the university, whatever their task. God calls all of us to holiness and for all of us He sends his Spirit.

“How can we know,” the Holy Father asks us in his apostolic exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate (no. 166) “if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something
more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment.” In our invocation to the Holy Spirit we include this request, the gift of wisdom to be able to direct our entire life to God, and especially now, in this school year that we are about to begin.

Our docility to the Holy Spirit will enable us to grow, to mature, to open ourselves and aspire to attain all the truth that Jesus promised us, the holiness to which He calls us, without neglecting but rather making use of our daily commitments. Learning how to foster our desire for holiness amid our daily tasks, wanting to live in intimacy with God, offering Him the best of ourselves in each thing we do, even in the smallest of our daily actions. And this will be the best way to become the witnesses that Jesus asks us to be for our world: “you also will bear witness to me” (Jn 15:27), bringing with us the beauty of our faith, making Christ himself present in our lives.

In our Mother Mary, we see the most beautiful example of discernment and docility to the Holy Spirit. Full of grace and Mother of Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit, Mary was able with his help to always discern God’s will and respond each time: “Here I am, be it done unto me according to your will.” We ask Mary to teach us to recognize and docilely follow the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
“Be not afraid; from now on you will be a fisher of men.” With these words, Christ changes Simon’s life and this fisherman from Galilee now knows what he is living for. Like him, every person faces this question sooner or later: what is my mission in life?

Next week, the Synod of Bishops will reflect in Rome about “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” Besides asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten the Synod Fathers, let us take this occasion to reflect on our own path, since we all have a divine vocation: we are all called by God to union with him.

The faith is a powerful light, capable of illuminating a person’s future and inspiring desires for a fulfilled life. At a moment in life when perhaps childhood securities come crashing down and the light of faith can also seem to weaken, each person needs to remember our deepest truth: that we are children of God and have been created for love. God makes the most radical call of all. He calls each and every one of us to be completely happy at his side. The Creator does not throw us into life and then forget about us. When creating us, he loves us and calls us. Therefore the discernment of our own path in life needs to be illuminated by faith in God’s love for each one of us.

Be not afraid, Jesus says to Peter. “Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices,” the Pope writes in his letter to young people to announce the Synod. Each one’s personal search can generate a kind of restlessness as we experience the “vertigo” of freedom. Will I be happy? Will I have the strength? Will it be worthwhile making this commitment? But in these moments God does not leave us alone either. He will inspire us if we are ready to listen to him. As we ask him each time we pray that most beautiful prayer: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”: thy will be done in me, in you, in each one of us.

Thinking about so many young people who would like to follow God’s plans, we ask that they not only receive light to see their path but also the strength to want to unite themselves to the divine will. We can be helped by realizing that when God asks us for something, in reality he is offering us a gift. We are not the ones doing him a favor. It is God who illuminates our life, filling it with meaning.
May both young people and adults realize that holiness, far from being an obstacle to accomplishing our dreams, is in fact their fulfillment. All our desires, all our projects, all our loves can form part of God’s plan. As Saint Josemaría reminds us: “Charity lived well is already holiness.”

The Christian life does not involve identifying ourselves with an idea, but rather with a person: with Christ Jesus. For faith to illumine each of our steps in life, besides asking ourselves “Who is Christ for me?” let us also consider: “Who am I for Christ?” Thus we will discover the gifts God has given us that are directly related to our personal mission. And then an interior attitude of openness to the needs of others will gradually mature in us, and we will know how to put ourselves at the service of everyone, and see with more clarity the place in the world that God has entrusted to us.

In a society that often thinks too much about well-being, the faith can help us to raise our eyes to a higher reality and discover the true dimension of our own existence. If we are bearers of the Gospel, our passing through this world will be fruitful. And the whole society will without doubt benefit from a generation of young people who ask themselves, with faith in God’s love for us: What is my mission in this life? What mark will I leave behind me?

Interview Granted to Vatican Insider, Italy (October 2, 2018)

Andrés Beltramo Álvarez (interviewer)

“Forgiveness for our failings and sins.” An unusual request at a time of celebration. On this 90th anniversary of the Opus Dei’s founding, the Prelate Fernando Ocáriz wanted to recognize the shortcomings of the members of the Work, especially for those people who did not receive the “generosity and affection they needed.” At the same time, he expressed his gratitude for the thousands of people all over the world who, thanks to the path proposed by the Prelature, “wish to fall in love with Christ and be souls of prayer in the midst of the world.”
The third successor to Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer is originally from France (he was born into a Spanish family exiled during the civil war). He has been at the head of Opus Dei since January 23, 2017. In this interview with *Vatican Insider* and on the anniversary of its foundation, he speaks about the challenges the Prelature faces and points to the invitation of Pope Francis to all the faithful of the world to pray for the unity of the Church and against the attacks of the devil. As he states clearly: “Everything that is contrary to unity does not come from God, but from the enemy.”

*What is the state of health of Opus Dei on this 90th birthday?*

“I thank God for all the Catholics who, with the grace of God, respond freely, every day, to the Christian vocation. Among them, men and women of Opus Dei, or who participate in the apostolates of the Work. The pastoral journeys I have made this summer in Nigeria, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, have also led me to this consideration, seeing so many young people and adults eager to fall in love with Christ and to be souls of prayer in the midst of the world, contemplating many realities of service that have borne fruit thanks to St. Josemaría’s message: schools, hospitals, universities, and so on... To all this we must also add the limitations of each one; the objective or subjective obstacles we find; the difficulty, for example, of developing a true work of evangelization in some complex environments, sometimes where Christians are truly persecuted. An anniversary marks a good time to thank God and, at the same time, to ask for forgiveness for our faults and failings. I am thinking, for example, of those people who have been in contact with the work of Opus Dei and to whom we have not been able to respond with the generosity and affection they needed. The 90th anniversary leads us to say to God, as Blessed Alvaro del Portillo used to do: ‘Thank you, forgive me, help me more.’”

*What does it mean to lead Opus Dei in the times of Pope Francis?*

Saint Josemaría loved to repeat in Latin: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam.* That is, ‘all with Peter, to Jesus through Mary.’ Union with Peter, at all times, is a necessary path for Catholics. Now the Pope invites us all to go forth, avoiding any conformism that holds back the evangelizing dynamic in the periphery that is currently the middle classes of society, in
those environments in which, at times, God no longer has space, and poverty of values and ideals grows.

In this sense, it is urgent that we bring the joy of the Gospel to the family and to young people; spaces of evangelization that the last general congress of Opus Dei has set as a priority. Following the Pope’s wish for the Church, also in the Prelature we are committed to helping couples and marriages manifest the beauty of authentic love, while we accompany young people in the discovery of their mission in the world.

Five years have passed since the election of Pope Francis. What has been special to you about this period?

Among other things, his invitation to proclaim the Gospel through what he called the “saints next door”; to do one’s duty (pray, work, take care of the home, take care of the family, rest) with the hope that these tasks, even in the midst of difficulties and suffering, are a way of encountering God and of service to others. The Church is all the baptized together; each one is the protagonist of evangelization. I would also stress the Pope’s insistence on God’s forgiveness and mercy, especially during the Jubilee of Mercy. It implies constantly having in mind God’s love for all men and women, so clearly seen in the sacrament of reconciliation. Despite one’s own miseries, there is no man or woman who cannot hope for God’s forgiveness: there is always a path to return to him. On the other hand, the closeness of Pope Francis to the most vulnerable, calls all Christians to foster the “culture of encounter” that is so evangelical.

A few days ago, the Pope invited the faithful of the world to pray against the attacks of the devil, who always tries to destroy the unity of the Church. How did you receive this invitation?

My first reaction was joy, because Pope Francis’ invitation to pray for such an important intention gives us impetus and hope for the faith that the Pope himself has in prayer. On the other hand, it saddens us, because it responds to a difficult situation. Everything that is contrary to unity does not come from God, but from the enemy. He also asks us to pray to Saint Michael. Unity is a necessary condition for life, also because, for the Church, for theology and for the faith, the Pope is the visible principle of unity; the burden of unity falls on the Pope and hence he asks us to help
with prayer, not only now, but always. Every time he finishes a letter he asks: “Pray for me.” It is clear that it is not just a nice, pious phrase, but that he really believes in prayer and asks for prayer, especially in this difficult moment. We must always pray for the Pope; and the more difficult the situations are, the more dangers there are against unity, the more we need to be with the Pope and with the unity of the Church.

So is the Pope asking that before we become upset or get angry about problems, we need to return to what is essential?

Binding the figure of the Pope with unity is not only good, but essential. The Pope is the visible principle of unity, faith, and communion. I insist, it is a reason for joy, but also for sorrow, because of the current difficulties.

For many years Opus Dei has been present in countries such as China and Russia, the same countries that the Pope has included in his priorities. Are they still “taboo” countries for the Church?

In the case of Russia, the presence of the Catholic Church is appreciated by the Orthodox hierarchy, and there is a desire for fraternal collaboration, which grew after the meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch of Moscow in 2016. Catholics and Orthodox share many spiritual and cultural challenges, and the faithful of Opus Dei who live in Russia work together with other Christians to promote the family, respect for life, help for the needy, the determination not to be afraid to go against the tide for young people, support for Christians persecuted in different parts of the world, etc.

And in the case of China, on what paths can Christians travel?

As for China, the new agreements necessarily imply new challenges, as the Pope explained. The Church in China wants to live its faith and continue with the work of evangelization, and the few faithful of Opus Dei who work in this great country wish to contribute to this, learning from other Catholics, and bringing the message of sanctification of ordinary life.

After the media crises that Opus Dei has had to deal with in the past, such as that of the “Da Vinci Code,” do you feel that the nature of the Prelature has already been explained clearly enough?
It seems to me that, in large part, these are perceptions of the past, quite common when a new reality arises in the Church. In the case of Opus Dei, for example, it has required effort to explain the autonomy of its members who, being lay people like most of the faithful of the Church, enjoy the same freedom in their life, professional choices whether intellectual or political, without their views or actions representing the Prelature, as happens with the faithful of any other ecclesial constituency: diocese, ordinariate, etc... As the centenary approaches, there are a great many people who have known Opus Dei directly, not only by hearsay, and have managed to make a true judgment based on reality.

Are there still people who consider it a closed and sectarian group?

It isn’t surprising that from time to time pseudo-literary or fictional phenomena like the one you mentioned arise. I think that sometimes there is no other remedy than to respond to these events with a smile and work patiently to bring out the truth. The caricature of Opus Dei was so far from the truth that it was almost comical. With hindsight, I can say that it helped to accumulate experience on how to make ourselves better known, with a much wider audience than usual. And I thank God for the thousands of people who have drawn closer to the Church through this apparently unfortunate event. From the perspective of faith, criticism and opposition have always spurred Christians to a greater spirit of prayer, humility, and the desire to share with others the joy of a life according to the Gospel.

The future of Opus Dei?

My desire for the future is that, faithful to the charism of Saint Josemaría, all of us in Opus Dei let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit towards a renewed evangelizing drive. It is a matter of bringing the warmth of Christ to many friends, family, colleagues, neighbors. The essential thing about this evangelizing drive is not to set in motion new activities or institutions such as those that already exist, and which, in themselves, are already something very positive, but to fuel personal friendship, openness to all and the spirit of service: profoundly evangelical attitudes that are fundamental to the Christian apostolate and that, at the same time, are compatible with the flaws and weaknesses that we all have.
What will the challenges be?

The challenges are very different. In countries where Christians are a minority, such as Indonesia or Sri Lanka (to name two in which the Prelature has begun a stable work in recent years), it is very important to maintain trust in God and have great faith: the Christian commitment of the Opus Dei faithful, and of Catholics in general, is a small seed, whose fruits grow little by little, with the grace of God. In other countries of Christian tradition, perhaps the main challenge is to live the Gospel with joy and authenticity, without blending in with a society that often puts material or economic factors first. Another obvious challenge, common to the whole Church, is the generational change. Every year about a thousand faithful of the Prelature die, people who, in a certain sense, have completed their journey: together with the pain experienced in the face of each of these human losses, they are also a great spiritual force and a support for the work of evangelization of the Church in the world.”

Addresses and Other Statements

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Campus Bio-Medico University, Rome (October 3, 2018)

Crossing the threshold of this university is very moving for me. My memories go back to the last days Bishop Javier Echevarría spent with us on earth, in the University Polyclinic here. Surrounded by the affection of all of you and the care of the medical and nursing staff, we accompanied him together on his way to the home in Heaven.

But it also gives me great joy to see made a reality in these buildings a project that, just a few decades ago, was only a dream. Those who work
every day in such a large undertaking may sometimes fail to grasp, with just one look, the itinerary of these past 30 years. But those who, like myself, follow you daily with affection, even if we are not physically present, are surprised by the distance covered in such a short time, since Blessed Alvaro del Portillo in 1988 encouraged the beginning of this initiative, which we now see with our own eyes. This endeavor, let us never forget it, is the result of the dedication, study, work—and also of the faith—of thousands of men and women who work in the University, the Polyclinic and other initiatives—cultural, educational and social—that have arisen around these buildings. The Campus Bio-Medico, although still quite young, today has its own internationally recognized personality, which fully integrates it into the great university tradition, a tradition that has its roots in history.

And in reference to history, it is worthwhile remembering that the university plays an important role in the future of society. Although its role has evolved from the Middle Ages to the present day, its mission is now more necessary than ever. We will always need a place where knowledge is deeply cultivated out of love for the truth, and transmitted in a disinterested way. We need a place where the study of problems and the search for solutions is carried out with competence and professionalism, not with a partisan mentality or in pursuit of personal interests and superficial fads. We are committed to the university as a place where culture becomes a service to mankind and not a pretext for self-affirmation or the exercise of power. A place, that is, where words such as “truth” and the “common good” are joined together and continue to seriously challenge us, where scientific progress and human progress can grow without harmful missteps.

This mission is not out-of-date. We are encouraged to carry it out eagerly, above all, by the students we have met, whom you, professors, see in the classrooms and laboratories of the Bio-Med Campus. The students are seeking not only professional preparation and competence, but also the example of teachers whose virtues they can imitate and in whom they can truly trust. The mission of the university, right from its beginnings, has been sustained by the Christian inspiration that led to its birth and subsequent development in Western civilization. This inspiration, implicitly present in the foundations of every university, can and must come to light here too, because it is the lifeblood of the organism, both in its
teaching and research dimensions and in the work of those who provide care and assistance in the health centers of the Campus.

Christian inspiration is not a formal or extrinsic quality of the work carried out here, but rather represents the beating heart that gives it life, day by day, in personal relationships and in the deepest reasons for one’s study and research. This inspiration does not endanger the pluralism of its teaching, the autonomy of the research, or the professionalism of the practices required for the best medical care, because the “principle of the Incarnation,” which guides every true Christian endeavor, uniting the human with the divine, requires precisely these dynamics, in accord with the laws of each science. A university of Christian inspiration must, above all, be a good university, in order not to lose its credibility. The Christian inspiration of the Campus Bio-Medico is manifested through the spiritual assistance generously made available to everyone, professors and students, and especially to the patients in the health-care centers. But it must also be seen intellectually, by offering a mature synthesis between faith and reason, providing the light needed to illumine the ultimate meaning of the various disciplines studied here, and guiding the medical practice towards truth and goodness.

Ethics, anthropology, and even theology, can and should be present in the work of the university, supporting it and making explicit all its potential for knowledge and service. The goal, therefore, as I recently reminded people in a meeting with professors from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, is “to discover and share with everyone the knowledge of the moral law that is within the reach of human reason and that, therefore, can be understood and grasped by all men and women, even by those who do not have the Christian faith. All questions need to be discussed with ‘the force of truth,’ which can overcome the claims of the alleged ‘truth of force.’ Thus the Christian spirit can heal the structures of earthly life and shape society according to the divine plan of redemption” (*Work and Holiness*, p. 49, EDUSC, 2018).

The Campus is also at the crossroads of some of the great challenges that the Holy Father mentioned in his address to the Pontifical Council for Culture last year (Pope Francis, *Address*, November 18, 2017). The first challenge today, he said, is found in medicine and genetics, “which allow us
to look inside the most intimate structure of the human being and to even intervene in it in order to modify it.” Also the challenges raised by recent developments in neuroscience and autonomous “thinking” machines. “Today we are increasingly aware that it is necessary to draw from the treasures of wisdom preserved in religious traditions, from popular wisdom, from literature and the arts, which touch the depths of the mystery of the human being, without forgetting, indeed rediscovering, those contained in philosophy and in theology” (Ibid.).

We can find light here in the spirit of Opus Dei, which has inspired and continues to inspire this marvelous aim: sanctifying work, sanctifying oneself in work, sanctifying others through work, as St. Josemaría said (see Christ Is Passing By, no. 122). Discovering work’s ethical and service dimensions, thinking and acting on the basis of the faith. Discovering the *quid divinum* in our daily work (see Conversations, no. 114), becoming aware of God’s love for us in the smallest circumstances, even in the midst of adversity.

Saint John summed up the experience of the Apostles in their relationship with Christ in this way: “we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us” (*1 Jn* 4:16). Seeking the *quid divinum*—the “divine element” hidden in material realities—will lead to finding it also in other men and women, as creatures loved by God; and to see it also hidden in the difficulties themselves. If this is lacking, if ultimately love is lacking, the material development of the world will be of little use to us (see *1 Cor* 13:1-13). To achieve these ambitious goals, with the help of God’s grace which will always be present, the Prelature offers, as in other similar apostolic undertakings, a service that facilitates the encounter with Jesus and with the teachings of the Church. It is not a question of a relationship of dependence or control, but rather an opportunity offered to everyone to deepen their Christian formation in and through their professional activity.

I would like to wholeheartedly encourage all those who work at the university and in the health centers on the Campus to renew their eagerness for their mission. I know very well that all of you have to face many difficulties every day, since your work involves delicate and important topics. You are often called to open up paths that do not yet exist, so that others can follow them. The temptation could arise to let yourselves be
overwhelmed by unresolved problems, by the lack of resources or by the complexity of relationships involved, and even weaken your enthusiasm in your daily work. We all need hope and optimism, but optimism should not be founded on the abstract, as a sterile, rhetorical exhortation. Rather, I encourage you to base it on the small and specific fruits that you see in your daily work: the satisfaction you feel at the end of a university class that opens up new horizons for you or, as teachers, when you notice that the knowledge you try to pass on has been well understood; the work of a colleague that improves thanks to your commitment and example; the gratitude of a sick person for the attention received; the appreciation for order and good taste in those who take care of the material services, and who make your work so much easier. Hope and optimism must ultimately be based on the fact that this university and its activities are motivated by a deep spirit of service. Only this can justify all our effort and sacrifice: a spirit of service that for so many of us is illumined and strengthened by the light of faith and Christian charity.

I conclude with the desire that science and service, competence and generosity, faith and geometry, may always go hand in hand. As in every work of Christian inspiration, the professional dimension and a family atmosphere are not opposed, but should grow together. As St. Paul's hymn to charity reminds us, love can and should guide everything we do. And as St. Josemaría reminded us, it is love that makes small things great. Thank you for your work. I assure you of my daily prayer for all of you and for your families, and I am relying on your prayers.
The beginning of this academic year coincides with the entry into force of the apostolic constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, with which the Holy Father wants to give a new legislative structure to ecclesiastical universities and faculties (see art. 88). On this occasion, I would like to briefly consider a focus that, in my opinion, can assist the desire expressed in the foreword of this document, namely, the full and vital insertion of ecclesiastical studies in the effort to evangelize the world, a mission to which we are called. In the words of the Pope: “This, then, is a good occasion to promote with thoughtful and prophetic determination the renewal of ecclesiastical studies at every level, as part of the new phase of the Church’s mission, marked by witness to the joy born of encountering Jesus and proclaiming his Gospel, that I set before the whole People of God as a program in *Evangelii Gaudium*” (Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, Foreword, no. 1).

Hence the view that the world of ecclesiastical studies is a separate “enclave,” enjoying an apparently self-sufficient logic with respect to the real problems of the Church and the world, must be decisively rejected. A merely scholarly vision of these subjects would lead to viewing the academic sphere as enclosed in its growing specialization, far from any concern to proclaim the Gospel, and hence to respond to people’s real concerns. The scientific attitude in research and teaching seems to require a certain detachment from what is happening in the real world and from any perspective of true service.

As *Veritatis Gaudium* insists, “the most urgent and enduring criterion [for the renewal of studies] is that of contemplation and the presentation of a spiritual, intellectual and existential introduction to the heart of the kerygma, namely the ever fresh and attractive good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Foreword, no. 4a). Therefore the soul of theological studies must always be the authenticity of the Christian message, with the fundamental concern to serve the Church and society. Thus there is no risk of confusing freedom in the work of theology and other disciplines and the legitimate pluralism this effort entails, with an intellectual and vital distancing from the only truth that saves, from adherence to Christ and to the Church.

This university was founded with a deeply apostolic concern. Some words of Saint Josemaría come to mind here, which certainly go beyond the
scope of the ecclesiastical sciences but which apply perfectly to them: “Since you want to acquire a Catholic or universal mentality, here are some characteristics you should aim at: a breadth of vision and a deepening insight into the things that remain alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy; a proper and healthy desire, which should never be frivolous, to present anew the standard teachings of traditional thought in philosophy and the interpretation of history; 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” (Furrow, no. 428). The founder of Opus Dei encouraged us to seek unity of life in everything we do, in full harmony with an outlook that unites study with service, while never forgetting that our Christian life is based on the sacraments and prayer.

I remember an informal meeting that Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, the founder of this university, had in 1984 with the teaching staff, who were about to begin the undertaking that was then called the Roman Academic Center of the Holy Cross. Among other practical points of advice that he gave were two that showed very clearly how he viewed academic work. The first related to the choice of research topics. Among so many possibilities, Bishop Del Portillo strongly advised us to choose those that could have a greater impact on our service to the Church and souls. The second suggestion, no less practical, was addressed especially to philosophers, but it is valid for everyone: to strive for clarity in what we write, the clarity that he loved and sought in his own writings.

All university work and every aspect of the university needs to be directed to the Church’s salvific mission. Dedicating ourselves as teachers to research and teaching of the sacred sciences is in itself a deeply apostolic work. Spending time in Rome as a student not only does not separate us from service to the Church, but it implies a gift to strengthen that service. Working at the university in the various tasks of management and organization takes on all its value when it is lived as an indispensable participation in our common mission.

I ask through the intercession of Mary Sedes Sapientiae for the gift of the joy of the truth, and declare the academic year 2018–2019 inaugurated.
Words of the Prelate on the Canonization of Paul VI and Oscar Romero (October 11, 2018)

The new saints Paul VI and Oscar Romero were two pastors completely dedicated to the service of the Church and the world they lived in, untiring promoters of unity and fraternity. The canonizations this Sunday are a joyful invitation to beg our Lord to grant, preserve, and increase these essential gifts in everyone.

Pope Paul VI constantly strove to foster communion in the Church and unity among all Christians, always basing the desire for spiritual renewal on a complete fidelity to the Gospel. His service to several Pontiffs, prior to his later mission as successor to Peter, is a luminous example of how to seek harmony with the Pope, with the other shepherds and with all the faithful in the Church. Making use of a prayer this holy Pontiff composed in 1972, we can ask God “to open still more our spirit and our heart to the specific demands of love for all our brothers and sisters, so that we may be ever more effective builders of peace.”

The new saint Oscar Romero often meditated on Christ’s prayer for unity: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you.” He called this “the true unity” and used to say: “disunion in the Church is sad, my brothers, it is the anti-sign of Christ” (Homily, April 30, 1978). He saw the urgent need for communion in the Church: of Catholics among themselves and of everyone with the Holy Father. We also especially ask him, who had such great love for his people, to intercede for unity and respect among all Salvadorans and for an end to the scourge of violence.

Pope Francis on Sunday will also canonize the priests Francesco Spinelli and Vicenzo Romano, the women religious Maria Katharina Kasper and María Ignacia de Santa Teresa, and the young layman Nunzio Sulprizio. Now that the Church is reflecting on the faith and the vocational discernment of young people, let us go to the intercession of the new saints
to ask God to grant young people expanded horizons, and that the message of Jesus may continue to reach many young men and women who will decide to follow him generously on the various paths that exist in the Church.

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz

Prelate of Opus Dei

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28th Marian Family Conference at the Shrine of Torreciudad, Spain (September 1, 2018)

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Responsorial Psalm: Lk 1:46-47). When repeating these words of Our Lady in the responsorial psalm, we have expressed our desire to accompany our Mother in her attitude of thanksgiving and praise to God. We have many reasons to raise our hearts to God, who wants to carry out great things in us, and through us in our families, in society and in the whole world.

Today, in celebrating this Marian Day of the Family close to Our Lady of Torreciudad, we raise our hearts to God with these words of holy Mary. Certainly, we are and we realize we are very little, greatly in need of God’s help in order to be good children of his and bring forward our families in accord with his will. But with our Mother in Heaven we can pray this prayer of thanksgiving to God: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

In the Gospel we have seen how an angel restored peace to Saint Joseph’s heart, in a complicated moment in the history of the family of
Nazareth (see Mt 1:18-23). We are amazed to see how Mary and Joseph also encountered difficulties in bringing forward their family! The history of their home is not an idealized one. The Holy Family was without doubt the happiest family the world has ever seen or will see, but nevertheless they had to confront real setbacks and problems.

“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him” (Rom 8:28). We have heard these words of Saint Paul in the second reading. Many of us will recall how Saint Josemaría summed them up in three words: omnia in bonum, everything works for the good. How often these words will have helped us to embrace God’s will, also when we don’t understand why he allows something that makes us suffer or that causes others to suffer. We can also apply them in the context of each home. Everything works for the good: a financial problem that requires a change of plans, the challenges involved in raising children, the difficulties in trying to make compatible a demanding job with the needs of the home… Everything works for the good, if we put everything in God’s hands. He will give us the strength needed to turn it into an opportunity to grow as a family, to find in these small or great challenges a way to be more united, because everyone bears them with love.

“I thank God,” says Pope Francis, “that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfill their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way” (Apostolic Exhort. Amoris laetitia, 57). These are hope-filled words. At the same time, they invite us to ask ourselves: are we aware of the great good that families do when they strive to be a school of communion, of forgiveness, of solidarity? Truly, families can give light and warmth to other families, to friends, neighbors, school or work colleagues. “God wants every family to be a beacon of the joy of his love in our world. What does this mean?” the Holy Father asked a few days ago in Ireland. “It means that we, who have encountered God’s saving love, try, with or without words, to express it in little acts of kindness in our daily routine and in the most hidden moments of our day” (Address, Dublin, August 25, 2018).

To attain this, there is no need to wait until everything in one’s own home is going perfectly. “Every Christian home,” Saint Josemaría said, “should be a place of peace and serenity. In spite of the small frustrations of
daily life, an atmosphere of profound and sincere affection should reign there together with a deep-rooted calm, which is the result of authentic faith that is put into practice” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 22). This is how families can cooperate very directly and effectively in building up and strengthening the civilization of love that Saint John Paul II spoke about.

In the Collect prayer today we have addressed God with these words: “In your commandments the family finds its authentic and sure foundation.” This is truly the rock that gives stability to the family: the loving and wise plan of our Creator and Father for the family. Therefore we want to get to know and appreciate ever better the features of this marvelous divine plan, and spread it joyfully in every sector of society.

Let us also renew today, close to Our Lady, the resolution to live the Communion of Saints intensely. Let us pray for the Church, for the Pope, and for all the shepherds and faithful. And may we raise our prayer to Heaven today especially for all the world’s families, asking that they receive the strength of the prayer and sacrifice that accompanies each of our days.

Our Mother, Our Lady of Torreciudad, with your help we want to share this joyful and hope-filled vision of the family with those around us. We ask you to teach us to go forward together, as a family, towards the encounter with God and with other men and women. And that we not become discouraged when the path becomes hard, or when we stumble, because we know that you always accompany us.

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Interview Granted to Famiglia Cristiana, Italy (October 14, 2018)

By Orazio La Rocca
Carrying out academic and cultural initiatives for the formation of young people all over the world, especially among the most needy. Bringing to life hospitals, reception and rehabilitation centers with the most advanced techniques at the service of the sick, the suffering and those in need of care. But, at the same time, bringing the Word of God to everyone, near and far, men and women, rich and poor. Without fearing to evangelize businessmen, politicians and financiers as well, with a spirit of evangelical service, following in the footsteps of the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá.

This is the Opus Dei of the third millennium says the Prelate, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, 90 years after the Work was founded. Born in Paris in 1944, to Spanish parents exiled in France during the Spanish Civil War, Ocáriz has been Prelate since January 23, 2017, following Javier Echevarría and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, successor in 1975 to the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá. A professor of fundamental theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, a consultant to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and other pontifical departments, he is also a good tennis player who would like to play almost every day if he had time. And perhaps that is why he rejects so forcefully, like a volley in tennis, those who still associate the Work “with who knows what purpose,” with high finance and political power. “These are dark legends and past falsehoods that time has erased,” the Prelate insists. Opus Dei’s only concern is “to help all mankind make progress, without discrimination, offering the spirit of the Gospel to all men and women.”

You are the fourth Prelate of Opus Dei. Is your Founder’s “presence” in the Work still strong?

Certainly, since it could not be otherwise. St. Josemaría Escrivá is always among us. He never abandons us. We could speak of a living, tangible, familiar presence. I see many people in Opus Dei seeking advice from the founder’s writings, who ask him for help in times of difficulty, and have recourse to his intercession for their needs. This is reality deeply rooted in the interior life of many people each day, including those who perhaps don't even know about Opus Dei but have a devotion to St. Josemaria. His mortal remains are here, in the central offices of Opus Dei in Rome, in Our Lady of Peace, the prelatic church, and thousands of
people from all over the world come to express their gratitude or their concerns in the silence of prayer.

Can it be said, then, that more than 45 years after his death in Rome on June 26, 1975, St. Josemaría Escrivá is still at the head of the Work, even at this turbulent beginning of the third millennium?

We are all trying to continue the spirit that he left us, and that he in turn received from our Lord: seeking God in the midst of the daily commitments of family life, work, prayer, friendship, service and rest. The challenge is to try to make this effort always up-to-date, in different times and places.

But what are you in particular doing to bring Opus Dei closer to ordinary people and to eliminate the residual prejudices that, rightly or wrongly, see the Work as more “attentive” to the powerful?

Opus Dei is attentive to the spiritual needs of everyone. That “black legend” is a thing of the past. For example, in Italy, in Rome, one of the initiatives promoted since the seventies is the Elis Center, which seeks to give an opportunity for professional formation and social inclusion to young migrants and young people from southern Italy who otherwise would not have this possibility. Moreover, in its formative activities it seeks to foster professionalism as a service to the common good and to other men and women. And, according to statistics, the young people who are trained at the Elis Center are usually successful in finding employment. This is our path.

And in Rome there is also the Campus Bio-Medico, which in a few years has established a prestigious Faculty of Medicine together with a hospital and rehabilitation centers. Like the University of Navarra in Spain, with all the academic specializations.

That’s right. And in many other parts of the world the people of Opus Dei, together with many other people, promote many initiatives of this kind, expressly aimed at helping poor farmers, immigrants, those who have lost everything, to respond to the needs of their neighborhood or town. I can think of two initiatives in the Raval district of Barcelona, which have already assisted about 20,000 immigrants: the Braval and Terral Centers, with more than 300 volunteers, involved in educational, sports and
professional training programs. In Cologne, Germany, I was able to meet with the volunteers and priests in the parish of St. Pantaleon, where the diocese and municipality helped in the construction of a center for 30 refugee families fleeing the Syrian conflict. Thanks be to God, this type of institution has sprung up everywhere. If one asks about Opus Dei in Kinshasa, in the third poorest country in the world, many people could talk about how they were received affectionately at the Monkole Hospital, started by faithful of the Prelature with the help of other people.

You are speaking here about educational and health initiatives. But on the spiritual level, what does the Work do?

The effort to care for the spirit by Opus Dei is also of primary importance. Along with constant concern for the needy and migrants in hospitals and specialized care centers, for academic and work training, we should not forget the importance of bringing the Gospel to every person, not just to a part of the population. The Work tries to bring God’s Word to all men and women, both poor and rich. And here, the evangelization of business people, politicians, journalists and others with economic resources is of great importance for the Church’s social doctrine to become a reality in practice, as St. Josemaría Escrivá taught.

Messages

On the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul (July 1, 2018)

On Friday we celebrated the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. In the gospel at Mass we heard once again Jesus’ promise to Peter: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). These words remind us as well of the spiritual itinerary that very early on, Saint Josemaría set forth for us:
From apostolic times, the Church has suffered and continues to suffer persecutions and also internal attacks against its unity. This fact, far from discouraging us, should lead us to an ever-renewed vision of faith—a gift of God—which is shown in prayer for the Church, for the Pope, and in a special way for all those who are suffering persecution on account of the Gospel.

Pamplona, July 1, 2018

On the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6, 2018)

During the journeys of these months I am filled with gratitude to God to see how in so many places, daughters and sons of mine are setting up and developing projects so that Christ’s message and his call to holiness may reach many souls. Some of these projects are big, others smaller, and they are always accompanied by a spirit of service and sincere friendship with everyone. It is wonderful to see everywhere the same spirit and with such different faces.

It is also a reason for joy and gratitude to God to see how these apostolic projects, together with those organized by other institutions, are contributing to personal and social progress in broad sectors of many countries.

Don’t fail to unite yourselves to my prayer for each and every person.

Buenos Aires, August 6, 2018
Let us strive to offer the prayer and penance that the Holy Father has asked from everyone in his recent “Letter to the People of God.” And let us love the Church and the Pope with an ever greater love. It will be helpful for us to remember that the Church is not simply an assembly of men and women that we have joined. Rather, and above all, as Saint Josemaría taught, the Church is “Christ present in our midst, God coming towards mankind in order to save us, calling us with his revelation, sanctifying us with his grace, maintaining us with his constant help, in the great and small battles of our daily life” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 131).

We are drawing close to the 90th anniversary of the day on which God let Saint Josemaría see the Work. To prepare ourselves, let us try to rediscover, with new depth and desires of conversion, the strength of the personal call that God is addressing to us.

I ask you to pray for the new priests who will receive ordination tomorrow, and for the Synod that will take place in October.

Torreciudad, September 1, 2018

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Message of September 30, 2018

Pope Francis has invited all Catholics to recite the Rosary daily during the month of October, and at the end of it to pray the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* (“We fly to your patronage...”) prayer and the prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel (see press release from the Holy See Press Office, September 29, 2018).

These prayers will help us to spread Christ’s peace, and to pray especially for the gift of unity in the Church and in the world. As Saint Paul told the Ephesians, we need to realize that “we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (*Eph* 6:12).

I ask and encourage all members of the Work, cooperators, and those who take part in its apostolic work, to generously support this desire of the
Pope, and to extend this invitation to many other friends, beseeching our Mother Holy Mary and Saint Michael the Archangel to protect the Church.

September 30, 2018

Message of November 4, 2018

We have begun the month of November by celebrating the Solemnity of All Saints, and the following day, the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. These dates remind us that our hope is in heaven (cf. Col 1:5), a hope that illuminates our steps on earth. This hope tells us that the world in which we live will one day be transformed into “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet 3:13). It also tells us that our daily activities have a meaning that goes beyond what we see directly around us. As Saint Josemaría assured us, these activities acquire the “vibration of eternity” if we do them out of love for God and for others.

Another reality that fills us with consolation is the Communion of the Saints. How much it encourages us to know that we are never alone, that in Christ we are one Body! We build up the Church, and concretely the Work, wherever we are: all together and everywhere. We help uphold each other! In this regard, I especially ask for prayers for the 34 new deacons of the Prelature who were ordained yesterday in Rome.

Rome, November 4, 2018

Christmas Message (December 16, 2018)

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

At Christmas, which is fast approaching, we will once again hear the angels proclaim: “Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will” (Lk 2:14). Each year the echo of this refrain fills the entire
world. It stirs up in us a joyful hope, above all because peace has drawn close to us and we can contemplate it in the face of a Child. “For he is our peace” (Eph 2:14), Saint Paul later wrote, as he reflected on the mystery of Jesus Christ.

The world stands in great need of peace. Each of us, our families, the place where we work, the environment around us, need this Child whom the angels announce as the Savior (see Lk 2:11). Without him, every effort to bring peace to hearts will fall short. Therefore the Church never ceases speaking about Jesus to mankind, like the shepherds after seeing him in the manger (see Lk 2:16-18). We too want to make him known to others; in our apostolate “it is Christ we must talk about, not ourselves” (Christ Is Passing By, n. 163).

During these days of Christmas let us contemplate the great mystery of God’s love, in this Child who has been born for us (see Is 9:5). How easy it is to find or regain peace and serenity when we pray before the crib and let ourselves be captivated by Jesus in the manger surrounded by Mary and Joseph! In contemplating this mystery of love, God will give us new energy to transmit it to others.

With my most affectionate greeting and blessing,

Your Father

Rome, December 16, 2018

Letter on the Occasion of the 90th Anniversary of the Foundation of Opus Dei (October 1, 2018)

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

Tomorrow is the 90th anniversary of October 2, 1928. Shortly after that date, Saint Josemaría wrote, “On that day our Lord founded his Work; he brought to birth Opus Dei” (Personal Notes, no. 306). Our joy in celebrating this anniversary is also thanksgiving to God, who constantly
enriches his Church with gifts and charisms: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. For his mercy endures forever” (Ps 118:1). Before our Father’s eyes, there opened up the immense panorama of cooperating in reconciling the whole world with God, through professional work and the other circumstances of ordinary life.

Let us reflect on the primacy of God’s role. It is he who founded his Work, and who continues to bring it forward. As in the whole Church, the words of the Gospel become a reality: “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear” (Mk 4:26-28). Saint Josemaría did his part: intense prayer, a determined interior struggle and untiring apostolic initiative. Nevertheless, he always had the conviction that all the drive that moved him to serve souls came from God. “Lord, I thank you for having made me understand without the shadow of a doubt that everything is yours: the blossoms, the fruit, the tree, the leaves, and the clear water which springs up to eternal life. Gratias tibi, Deus! Gratias tibi, Deus!” (In Dialogue with the Lord, pp. 135-136 [no. 125]). The primacy of God’s grace is equally real in the life of every Christian, in the life of each and every one of us.

Besides reflecting on God’s gift let us renew our thanksgiving because, despite our own littleness, He has wanted to rely on us in order to make us his co-workers (cf. 2 Cor 6:1). At times it might seem that, in reality, our role in carrying out God’s plans is irrelevant. Nevertheless, he takes our freedom seriously and truly relies on us. Let us recall that young boy who placed the little that he had—five loaves of bread and two fish—in Jesus’ hands. Thanks to this small act of generosity, Christ fed a multitude of people (cf. Jn 6:1-13). God also counts on our daily response, made up of small things that become great through the strength of his grace. In this way we dedicate our best efforts to seeking him in our work and serving the people around us, and we strive to look at them and love them as he would. Thus, in a thousand different ways, we make present in the world the light and warmth that he has put in our hearts. All of this is our small contribution as children, which our Father God makes use of to work wonders in souls.
The Synod on young people, the faith, and vocational discernment will begin soon. Let us continue praying and ask for the light and impulse needed so that Jesus’ message may continue to reach many young men and women, and they may decide to follow him generously on the different paths that exist in the Church. The proximity of this event in the Church to the anniversary of the Work can help us to see our own personal vocation with renewed eagerness, with a young and enamored heart. Our Founder never lost his youthful heart. He underwent many setback and sufferings, but his love for our Lord kept him always young. And he revealed to us the secret of his youthfulness: “When I pray at the foot of the altar to God who gives joy to my youth (Ps 43:4), I feel young and I know that I will never consider myself old. If I keep true to my God, Love will constantly vivify me. My youth will be renewed like that of the eagle (see Ps 103:5)” (Friends of God, no. 31). If we remain united to our Lord, we will always be young, and he will continue to carry out his Work, ever ancient and ever new, in all the various places, times and cultures.

For a human life, ninety years is a lot; but for the Work it is certainly very few. We are still at the beginning. May this serve as a reminder for us of the gift we have received and of the beautiful mission Christ has placed in our hands.

Don’t stop accompanying me with your prayer. Above all, let us accompany the Holy Father at this time, so that we may all go together to Jesus through Mary.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Rome, October 1, 2018

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Letter on the Occasion of the Announcement of the Beatification of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landazuri (October 26, 2018)
My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

I have the great joy of sharing with you that today I received confirmation that our Holy Father Pope Francis has decreed that the beatification ceremony of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri will take place in Madrid, on Saturday, May 18, 2019.

Although other details regarding the celebration will be finalized later on, this news fills us with gratitude to God and to the Holy Father. I invite you all to join in my prayer to Guadalupe for the Pope’s intentions, especially for the work of the synod Fathers gathered together in Rome these days to talk about young people, the faith, and vocational discernment.

This event in the Church will help underline how a life of service to God and others, including the most needy, can be filled with joy and meaning, as we see through Guadalupe’s life. She knew how to find God in the daily efforts of her scientific research and teaching; in the various tasks of formation and government that Saint Josemaría entrusted to her; and in her illness, which she bore with a strong Christian spirit.

Those who knew her highlight her joy and good humor, rooted in the awareness of knowing herself to be a child of God, together with a determination and spirit of initiative that formed her universal heart. Her example is a reflection of how “the Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence” (Gaudete et Exsultate, no. 1).

I consider it providential that the beatification will take place on the anniversary of Guadalupe’s First Holy Communion. This coincidence reminds us how “putting Jesus at the center of our life means deepening in our contemplative prayer in the middle of the world, and helping others to travel along paths of contemplation” (Pastoral Letter, February 14, 2017).

Guadalupe will be the first lay person in Opus Dei to be raised to the altars. It is as if a seal of approval has been set on the path that our Lord helped Saint Josemaría to see 90 years ago, on October 2, 1928.

With all my affection, I bless you, your Father
ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
Escritos Varios Published, A New Volume in the Collection of Complete Works

The St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute has published a new volume containing a collection of St. Josemaría’s works from various sources. The book, entitled Escritos varios (Various Writings), has been published by Ediciones Rialp.

It is a critical-historical edition of eleven shorter pieces—articles, interviews, communications in congresses, conferences and homilies—that St. Josemaría prepared for publication over a period of almost fifty years, between 1927 and 1974, and that until now were scattered and difficult to find. In the words of Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz in the book’s prologue, “this variety offers a rich mosaic of the spirit of the founder of Opus Dei.”

The various texts have been divided into four sections, each with its own introduction. The first, “Homilies on the Church and the Priesthood,” includes three homilies published in the final years of the author's life; the second, ”Juridical-Canonical Writings,” includes an article from 1927 (the first publication by St. Josemaría), a conference from 1948, and a communication presented at a congress held in Rome in 1950; the third, “Articles and Interviews,” includes an article from 1969 and two interviews; the fourth, “Marian Writings,” is made up of two articles on Our Lady of the Pillar published in the 1970s.

The edition, which was edited by Philip Goyret, Fernando Puig and Alfredo Méndiz, includes a prologue by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Prelate of Opus Dei, and ends with an index of names and a section with facsimiles of some documents and illustrative photographs. The volume has 344 pages.

Philip Goyret (Raleigh, 1956) is an industrial engineer, priest and professor of ecclesiology and dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. He is the Rector of the church of San Girolamo della Carità in Rome.

Fernando Puig (Terrassa, 1968), also a priest, is professor of Church Organization and Government and vice-dean in the School of Canon Law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.
Alfredo Méndiz (Barcelona, 1960), With a PhD in history, is assistant director of the *St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute* and author of various publications on St. Josemaría and the history of the Church.

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**The Ninth International St. Josemaria Symposium, Faith and Society (September 19, 2018)**

The 9th International St. Josemaría Symposium, held by the Catalina Mir Foundation in IFEJA (Jaén, Spain), brought together more than 500 people to speak about faith and society.

Experts from the fields of teaching, communications, theology and medicine spoke on the life of Christians in society, answering questions related to science, the millennials, journalism, social networks, and equality, among other topics.

In the opening session, some 300 people heard José Ramón Pin Arboledas, professor emeritus of IESE's Department of Organizational Management and Business Ethics, speak about freedom, and education. Lluís Foix, a columnist for the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, gave a presentation entitled “Public Opinion, Truth and Lies.”

A panel on *Millennials and the Faith* filled the auditorium with young people, to hear the experience of Isabel Berges, fashion consultant; Daniel de la Fuente Feliú, bullfighter; María Vera Imago Christi, religious, and Marius Lekker, instgrammer. Another panel addressed the topic of science at the service of society and young people.

The symposium ended with a talk by Mariano Fazio, Vicar General of Opus Dei, who spoke after participants viewed the documentary film *Unity of Life in St. Josemaría*. He stressed that “if we want to transform the world, we have to love it passionately.” To achieve this transformation, he pointed to the need for interior life, unity of life, a desire to influence society, and transparency.
Devotion Throughout the World

At the Seminary of San Carlos in Saragossa, Spain

On December 1, a commemorative plaque was blessed at the site of what was formerly the seminary of San Francisco de Paula, to remind people that the founder of Opus Dei “lived, was formed, and was ordained” there. The site is now the San Carlos residence for priests.

The seminary of San Francisco de Paula was located there from its foundation in 1886 until its closing in 1951. On September 28, 1920, the young seminarian Josemaría Escrivá, coming from the seminary of Logroño, entered and remained there until his priestly ordination.

After the ceremony of blessing the plaque, Mass was celebrated in the church of San Carlos, presided over by Rev. Carlos Palomero, director of the priests’ residence; the vicar of the Opus Dei delegation in Saragossa, Rev. Pablo Lacorte, concelebrated.

In the almost five years of his stay at the seminary of San Francisco de Paula, Josemaría Escrivá received all of the Sacred Orders. On March 28, 1925, he was ordained a priest in the same place by Bishop Miguel de los Santos Díaz Gómara, then president of the Royal Priestly Seminary.

Symposium on the Family and St. Josemaría in Ljubljana, Slovenia

On October 6, 2018, a Symposium on the Family and St. Josemaría was organized in Ljubljana. The three presentations were: José Luis Gonzalez Gullon, “Timeliness of the Thought of St. Josemaría on the Family;” Professor Nuria Chinchilla, “Masters of our Destiny;” and Dugtual Derville, “The Family, a Pillar of Human Ecology.” In the afternoon a round table discussion was held on “Solutions to the Challenges of the Family in Slovenia.” About a hundred people took part the Symposium, most of them young people.

Portraits in the parish of St. Josemaría in Valencia, Spain

On Sunday, September 30, in the parish of St. Josemaría, a solemn Eucharist was celebrated in thanksgiving for the 90th anniversary of the
foundation of Opus Dei. Presiding was the Archbishop of Valencia, Cardinal Antonio Cañizares.

After the Mass, paintings of St. Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro were blessed, which will be placed for veneration in one of the side chapels. An exhibition was also inaugurated about various faithful of Opus Dei, both men and women, who are in the process of canonization.

*Words of St. Josemaría on a mural painted by 2,000 students*

“The time for giving a few coins and old clothes is over; we have to give our heart and life.” Half a century ago St. Josemaría addressed these words to those accompanying him on his first visit to the Tajamar School in Madrid.

His words were engraved on the memory of the teachers and the families from the surrounding Vallecas district who accompanied him, and some tape recordings of the event have been preserved. To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the school, the management team decided to paint them on one of its walls, which is more than forty meters long. All of the school’s 2,000 students lent a hand in this project, under the expert eye of the Boa Mistura team of street artists.

These words of St. Josemaría, placed on the wall next to the soccer field, will be seen often by the successive generations of Tajamar students. “We have to give our heart and life” will be engraved also on their souls.

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**Presentation of Book Last of the Romantics, by Mariano Fazio**

The Vicar General of Opus Dei, Msgr. Mariano Fazio, presented his book *Last of the Romantics* in Madrid on November 27. The book arose from the author's desire to settle a debt of gratitude to St. Josemaría. It offers keys to interpreting the message of seeking sanctity in ordinary life in light of the new challenges facing men and women in the 21st century.
“I had written about many things and people, but never about St. Josemaría. And I owe my vocation to Opus Dei and the priesthood to him. It was a debt of gratitude I owed to the founder,” Fazio said during a conversation with journalist Isabel Ramis in the auditorium of the Mapfre Foundation in Madrid.

Last of the Romantics, published by Rialp (and in English by Scepter Publishers), has now reached its fourth printing in Spanish. Fazio stresses in the book the continued relevance of the message preached by Escrivá, and that what changes over time are the circumstances in which it is embodied. Thus the meaning of topics such as the family, work, and parenthood have evolved greatly since 1928, the year Opus Dei was founded. “Families in the mid-twentieth century faced very different challenges than the families in 2018,” he said.

The message that all Christians are called to holiness is today the patrimony of the whole Church. The author pointed to Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Gaudete et exsultate, which describes the different ways of reaching holiness in daily life.

“Everyone now says that we are called to be saints,” Msgr. Fazio said. “The revolutionary thing about St. Josemaría is that sanctity is to be sought in each person’s daily circumstances.”

Living with imperfection

With regard to sanctifying our daily work, the Vicar General of Opus Dei said that our work needs to be done carefully, so that it can be offered to God. But he pointed out that in today's society “people are burdened by perfectionism.” “We need to learn how to live with imperfection,” cultivating virtues such as patience and knowing that the best is the enemy of the good.

At present, moreover, the work environment is marked by a spirit of rivalry, intense competition, and long hours that make it difficult to adequately care for one’s family. “If St. Josemaría were to speak today about sanctifying work, he would say: ‘Work less; get home sooner,’ ” he maintained.
This excessive attention to work also means that today the father figure is absent for many people. Fazio recalled that St. Josemaría discovered in 1931 the deep meaning of his divine filiation. However, “today fatherhood is in crisis; some fathers are overly demanding, abusive or even absent,” and this can influence a Christian’s understanding of divine filiation. The same happens with the family. “The perfect family does not exist; we all have families with problems and tragedies,” said Fazio. What St. Josemaría preached about the family “has to be put in the context of today’s family.”

**Freedom to love**

The title of the book is taken from some words of the founder of Opus Dei where he defines himself as “the last of the romantics.” He said he was ready to give his life to defend the freedom of all men and women, as were the liberals of the 19th century. “Freedom is not a simple choice between two football teams. Without freedom we cannot love. God has created us free so that we might love, and the proper act of love is self-giving. The one who has lived this to the full is Christ on the Cross. That is why Christians, in order to understand what freedom is, have to find themselves there.”

Freedom is often understood only as “doing what we want to,” and this paradoxically leads to falling into the slavery of power, pleasure, or wealth. “We need to defend freedom in all areas by drowning evil in an abundance of good,” he stressed.

In response to questions by the journalist Isabel Ramis, Msgr. Fazio insisted that Christians of the 21st century need to be committed to helping society progress, making Christ’s love and freedom reign in all sectors. “How the world would change if important politicians, journalists, film actors and businessmen, were consistent Catholics,” he added.

This commitment to the betterment of society should lead Christians to become involved in helping the poor and needy. “This is part of the spirit of Opus Dei because it is part of the spirit of the Gospel,” Fazio stressed. He encouraged those present to see what they could do for the most needy, and recalled that often “the first poor people we encounter are in our own homes”: people alongside us who are alone, sick, or in need of warmth and company.
Other Publishing News

Books by St. Josemaría


St. Josemaría Escrivá, *El matrimonio, vocación cristiana* [Homily], Mexico City, Minos Tercer Milenio, 2018, 17th Mexican printing.

Books about St. Josemaría


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News
Pontifical Appointments

On October 6, the Holy Father Francis appointed Msgr. Luis Felipe Navarro Marfá, currently rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, as a consultant to the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

Some Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

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

Rev. Felipe Álvarez Quintero,

*Parochial vicar of the parish of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Alcorcón, diocese of Getafè, Spain;*

Rev. Luis Miguel Álvarez Varela,

*Member of the priests’ council for the Archdiocese of Saragossa (Spain);*

Rev. Miguel Arce,

*Advisor to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of Piura, Archdiocese of Piura (Peru);*

Rev. Benito Calahorra Moreno de la Santa,

*Confessor for the Minor Seminary, diocese of Ourense (Spain);*

Rev. Msgr. Luis Gleisner Wobbe,

*Chaplain of the Clinical Hospital of the Catholic University of Chile (Chile);*

Rev. José Luis León Solís,

*Member of the priests’ council for the diocese of Merida-Badajoz (Spain);*

Rev. Pedro López Martín,

*Member of the priests’ council for the diocese of Cordoba (Spain);*
The Bishop of Cuenca, Jose Maria Yanguas, Ordains Three Deacons of the Prelature to the Priesthood at the Shrine of Torreciudad (September 2, 2018)

On Sunday, September 2, Bishop José María Yanguas Sanz of Cuenca, Spain, conferred priestly ordination on three deacons of the Prelature, Gabriel Robledillo Amezcua, Francisco Javier Pérez León, and Emanuel de Jesús Estrada Canizales, at the Shrine of Torreciudad. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, took part in the ceremony.

Bishop Yanguas, commenting on the Gospel that the liturgy provides for the Mass of ordination of new priests, said that “the priest participates in the office of good shepherd, proper to Jesus Christ our Lord. The good shepherd is the one who gives his life for the sheep, who gives himself, who gives himself to the sheep until death, until the total gift of himself, for the benefit of all who have been entrusted to him. Since it is the effort of people who give themselves, of people in love, it is carried out with joy, which is the note that makes love visible. Those who give themselves totally do so with joy, happy to pour themselves out as a sweet-smelling libation for the sheep of the flock.”

“The Church, dear ordinands,” continued Bishop Yanguas, “asks you to be joyful priests, filled with God’s love, willing to sacrifice yourselves
without reserve, eager to provide your brothers and sisters with the treasures of divine grace.”

The new priests were accompanied by many family members, friends and colleagues.

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Archbishop Celsa Morga of Merida-Badajoz Ordains 34 Deacons of Opus Dei (November 3, 2018)


“Your ordination as deacons today, and your future priestly ordination, will make you shepherds, and also fishermen and sowers,” Archbishop Celso Morga said in his homily. “We cannot just guard the sheep in the flock; we must also go in search of the lost sheep. We have to let down the nets, a thousand times if necessary, to bring in a good catch.”

“God,” he continued, “has sent his Son into the world out of love, and he wants to enter into the lives of the men and women of our time, our culture and our society. Our Lord sends us out to sow in this field, to fish in this sea: in this society that does not want to be disturbed and has a great power to numb those who would seek to awaken it.”

The bishop reminded the 34 deacons that ordination gives them a perennial sacramental character as servants. “We could say that this sacramental character reinforces what you already live or wish to live with the vocation to Opus Dei: service. Saint Josemaría was very explicit when he said that ‘Opus Dei has come to serve,’ and to serve with a humble and simple refinement, without waiting to be thanked.”

The new deacons were accompanied before, during and after the ceremony by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, family members, and many friends.

*The new deacons*
The 34 candidates come from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Venezuela, Chile, the United States, Kenya, France, Paraguay, El Salvador, Uganda, the Philippines, Peru and Italy. Their names are: Sêrgio Sardinha de Azevedo (Brazil), Luis Miguel Bravo Álvarez (Colombia), José María Cerveró García (Spain), Miguel Ángel de Fuentes Guillén (Spain), Ernesto de la Peña González (Mexico), José Luis de Prada Llusá (Spain), Javier María Erburu Calvo (Spain), Samuel Thomas Harold Fancourt (New Zealand), Gerardo Andrés Febres-Cordero Carrillo (Venezuela), José Nicolás Garcés Lira (Chile), Óscar Garza Aincíoa (Spain), Pedro González-Aller Gross (Spain), John Paul Graells Antón (United States), Diego Guerrero Gil (Spain), Jorge Iriarte Franco (Spain), Paul Muleli Kioko (Kenya), Yann Le Bras (France) Cristhian Alcides Lezcano Vicencini (Paraguay), Álvaro Linares Rodríguez (Spain), Miguel Llamas Díez (Spain), Eduardo Andrés Marín Perna (El Salvador), Javier Martínez González (Spain), Luis María Martínez Otero (Spain), Bernardo José Montes Arraztoa (Chile), Bernard Kagunda Nderito (Kenya), Deogratias Gumisiriza Nyamutale (Uganda), Nathaniel Peña Baluda (Philippines), Rafael Quinto Pojol (Philippines), César Augusto Risco Benites (Peru), Rafael de Freitas Sartori (Brazil), David Saumell Ocáriz (Spain), Cayetano Taberner Navarro (Spain), Claudio Tagliapietra (Italy) and Fernando María Valdés López (Spain).

Vicar General of Opus Dei, Synod Father at the Synod for Youth

The Holy Father Francis appointed the Vicar General of Opus Dei, Msgr. Mariano Fazio, as a synod father for the Assembly of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment. In an interview with Vatican News, Msgr. Fazio stressed what he views as some key words for this Synod: “listening and accompanying.”

“Young people need to be listened to, accompanied, understood and also guided,” he said. “But it’s not just about hearing,’ he stressed. “To hear is just to register the noise of words. It’s about listening with empathy,
trying—as Cardinal Newman said—to establish a heart-to-heart relationship. It's about listening so as to offer suggestions and guidelines.”

Msgr. Fazio recalled that the Synod had stressed that “Jesus knew how to listen to all his contemporaries and in particular to the young.”

The Vicar General of Opus Dei also pointed out that at the Synod “there has been a lot of talk about the scene of Emmaus, the Lord who comes to encounter people who were disoriented, and the young people whose heart is filled with enthusiasm just by coming into contact with Jesus. Jesus listens to them, but he also offers specific suggestions: he advises that they go to the Scriptures; he offers them the content of his merciful Love. I think young people need this especially today: to be very close to Jesus and to listen with an open heart to the proposal he makes, which is a proposal of Love.”

To recover the trust of those whose lives are far from the faith, Msgr. Fazio said that while one of the key words of the Synod is “listening,” the other one is “accompanying.” “We have to accompany young people. The one accompanying needs to be a person identified with Christ, who tries to bring young people into relation with Christ. We need to disappear, to stop being the protagonists, and instead become instruments for young people to find Christ again. If they see Christ in the people who accompany them, I think we can recover the trust that has been lost in the institutional Church.”

In the same interview, he said that the Synod had helped him to grasp the diversity of situations faced by young people today. “It is moving to listen to bishops from the Middle East about the persecution they are suffering; and to those from Africa, where they are experiencing unprecedented violence; and to those from the more developed countries, where the people live amid a society of well-being and comfort, but who seem to be suffocating in an atmosphere of materialism that lacks any spiritual content.”

Monsignor Fazio concluded with his hopes for the Synod: “I hope that we learn how to listen more, how to accompany better, and that we renew our apostolic zeal to reach not just the young people who have the gift of
faith, who have been baptized, but also, as our Lord said, that we reach the ends of the earth, with renewed enthusiasm, closely united to Jesus.”

Venerable Montse Grases, Proposed an as Example for Young People

The Synod on Young People offered a list of “Young Witnesses” as examples for youth today. Some have already been canonized and others are in the process of canonization.

One of these is the Spaniard Montse Grases, who loved basketball, tennis, music and theatre, and who bore with a contagious faith and optimism the painful illness that led to her death at the age of 18. She was a numerary in Opus Dei. Her example led many of her friends to discover the joy of Christian life.

The lives of other young people who embraced celibacy and sought holiness in their daily circumstances are also offered as examples, including the Italian Carlo Acutis, a computer enthusiast; Gianluca Firetti, an agricultural expert and soccer player; and Chiara Badano, who like Montse died at the age of 18 from cancer.

Among the 34 persons offered as an example are also young people who sought Christ on the path of courtship and marriage. These include Chiara Maria Bruno, a student of chemistry and pharmaceutical technology, and Carlotta Nobile, who studied art history and liked to play the violin. She was also a writer and had her own blog.
Youth Speaking Out is a series of five short videos published on the Opus Dei website, which take as their starting point some of Pope Francis’ wishes for today’s youth, made known at the pre-synodal meeting in Rome. Young people from different countries around the world share their testimonies and answer some questions the Pope asked them.

The Holy Father, as he has often said, wants to “listen to young people: young Catholics and non-Catholics, young Christians and young people of other religions, and young people who do not know if they believe or do not believe. All of them. It is important that you speak, that you do not let yourselves be silenced” (Address to Youth in Chile, January 17, 2018).

Archbishop of Florianopolis, Brazil, Receives Request to Open the Beatification Process of Marcelo Henrique Camara, Supernumerary of Opus Dei

On November 25, 2018, Archbishop Wilson Thaddeus Jönck of Florianopolis, Brazil, received the petition to open the process of beatification of the young layman Marcelo Henrique Câmara, a member of Opus Dei. The official ceremony took place in the cathedral of Florianopolis, and was presented by Vitor Galdino Feller and Maria Zoè Bellani Lyra Espíndola, postulator and vice-postulator of the cause respectively.

Marcelinho, as he was known to his family and friends, was born in Florianopolis on June 28, 1979. He graduated in Law in 2002 and was a prosecutor in Santa Catarina for a short period. In the Emmaus Movement he received the grace of a deep conversion. In April 2006 he asked for admission as a supernumerary in Opus Dei.

He began to live the spirit of the Work in an exemplary manner and carried out an extensive apostolate with his friends and acquaintances,
many of whom drew closer to the Church. Some of them also discovered the vocation to Opus Dei.

His close union with God helped him to receive serenely the news in 2004 that he had cancer. He underwent a long treatment and offered his suffering to God, while trying to fulfill faithfully his professional, family and social commitments.

He died on March 20, 2008, Holy Thursday, at the age of twenty-eight. Since then, his reputation for holiness has grown and many people have recourse to his intercession.

The process of beatification is being promoted by the Associação Marcelinho Henrique Câmara, formed by his friends and people with devotion to him.

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Blessing of the Reburial of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landazuri in the Royal Oratory of the Knight of Grace (Madrid)

On Friday, October 5, 2018, Bishop Juan Antonio Martínez Camino, auxiliary bishop of Madrid, presided over the ceremony of the blessing of the reburial of the mortal remains of Venerable Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri. They were returning to Madrid after 43 years in the cemetery of Pamplona, the city where Guadalupe died in July 1975.

The remains of Guadalupe now rest in a wooden casket with her name on it, in the Royal Oratory of the Knight of Grace in Madrid. A large group of people came to venerate her remains on the occasion of the ceremony, which was concelebrated by the vicars of Opus Dei in Spain and in Madrid, the rector of the Royal Oratory of the Knight of Grace, the delegate of the Causes of the Saints for the Archdiocese, the vice-postulator of the Cause, and Father Luis Cruz Ortiz de Landázuri, Guadalupe’s great-nephew.
Among the more than two hundred people who attended the ceremony were nephews and nieces, great-nephews and nieces and numerous other relatives of the future Blessed, including the niece who bears her name, Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, daughter of Dr. Eduardo Ortiz de Landázuri.

Publication of Posguerra, la Primera Expansion del Opus Dei Durante los Anos 1939 y 1940 [Postwar: the First Expansion of Opus Dei During the Years 1939 and 1940]

Onésimo Díaz, professor at the University of Navarra, has published Posguerra, la primera expansión del Opus Dei durante los años 1939 y 1940 [Post-War. The first expansion of Opus Dei during the years 1939 and 1940]. The book, published by Rialp, focuses on two intense years in the life of the institution founded by St. Josemaría Escrivá. Daily life in the student residence on Jenner Street in Madrid and the first apostolic trips to other cities in Spain are the main topics, presented in the context of the Spanish post-war period (especially with regard to politics, the university, and religion) and the Second World War.

The narrative presents important figures in Opus Dei’s history, including Alvaro del Portillo, Pedro Casciaro, José Luis Múzquiz, and José María Hernández Garnica, as well as other university students such as Alberto Ullastres, Rafael Termes, Jose Maria Albareda and Rafael Calvo Serer.

The author has carried out his research in a number of different archives: the General Archive of the Opus Dei Prelature in Rome; the General Archive of the Administration (Alcalá de Henares); the Archive of the Royal Palace in Madrid and the General Archive of the University of Navarra. The book includes photographs, a map, and an index of names.
Onésimo Díaz, who holds a doctorate in contemporary history from the University of the Basque Country and a doctorate in the history of the Church from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, is a researcher at the Center for Documentation and Studies on Josemaría Escrivá at the University of Navarra, and has written twelve books and more than thirty articles on contemporary history.

Presentation of Ernesto Julia's book:
Instantaneas de un cambio. Javier Echevarría, Prelado del Opus Dei
[Snapshots of a Change: Javier Echevarria, Prelate of Opus Dei]


It offers a portrait of Javier Echevarría focused especially on his years of government at the head of the Prelature (1994-2016).

Other publications of Interest


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INITIATIVES

• In Brief
IIT, a Vocational Training School, Lagos, Nigeria

The Institute for Industrial Technology (IIT) in Nigeria provides technical expertise to young people who have difficulty obtaining an education. The IIT, which was established in 2002 for the centennial of St. Josemaría’s birth, offers high quality technical training through the dual vocational training system (alternating classroom work with working for a company). The Institute also seeks to strengthen human virtues and values, the foundation for the integral development of the person.

On July 25, 2018, IIT received the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, during his pastoral visit to the country. Msgr. Ocáriz toured the school’s facilities and spoke with some of the students. Olumide Akinjo, director of the Institute, told the Prelate that the education offered includes important topics such as work ethics, marriage and family life. The Prelate encouraged those in charge to foster among the students a concern for the common good, which will have a big impact on their respective communities. “Besides acquiring technical skills, students also need to acquire human values,” he said.

In 2006, IIT became a full-fledged Vocational Training Center. To date, 14 classes of students have graduated in the three specialties offered: mechatronic engineering, electrical engineering and electro-technology. Over 30 companies collaborate with the Institute and more than 2,500 students have received training at IIT over the years. Seventy-five percent of them found employment in less than three months. Thanks to its system of scholarships, the courses are accessible to low-income families. IIT also offers retraining and skills improvement courses for industrial employees, with the aim of increasing the productivity and service capacity of their companies. In May 2017, IIT received the award for Most Innovative in Education in Nigeria from the West African newspaper Business Day. Its Seeds of Hope program provides skilled labor for businesses and has been a boon for the local economy.
In Brief

Gipuzkoa, Spain A Solidarity Dinner For Future Chefs

Under the slogan *Afrika, Elkarrekin bai* (“Africa, Together Yes” in Basque), the Harambee Africa Association launched a project to help 12 Kenyan girls pay for their hotel management studies at the Kibondeni (Nairobi) and Tewa (Mombasa) schools to become professional chefs. With their work, they hope to help their families as well as contribute to the development of the community where they live. 20 *sukaldaris* (“cooks” in Basque), led by Inaxio Muguruza, offered a solidarity dinner to raise funds so that the future chefs could complete their studies.

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Portugal 2,000 “Solidarity Backpacks” for Children in Cape Verde

Over a hundred schools in Portugal joined the *Solidarity Backpacks* campaign organized by the *Cape Verde 2018 Project*, which collected 2,000 backpacks filled with school supplies for Cape Verden students with few resources.

The project, begun in 2018, involved university students and young professionals belonging to several Portuguese entities including Alamos Youth Association, Rampa Club, and the Maria Beatriz Lopes da Cunha Foundation, in collaboration with the local community of Cape Verde.

The spokesperson for a group of physiotherapy students at the Piaget de Silves Institute said that “experiences like this are important not only for our personal enrichment, but also for our growth as citizens who want a more just and connected society.”

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Tegucigalpa, Honduras Meeting with the Author of “Posguerra”

On August 21, Rev. Onésimo Díaz, an historian and member of the St. Josemaría Historical Institute, and author of the recent book Posguerra [Post-war] about the situation of Opus Dei in the years immediately after the Spanish Civil War, gave a talk in Tegucigalpa entitled “The Family Environment Transmitted by St. Josemaría.” The activity was sponsored by the Foundation for the Causes of the Saints of the Opus Dei Prelature, which seeks to spread information about and devotion to St. Josemaría and other faithful of the Prelature, including Blessed Alvaro del Portillo and the Servant of God Ernesto Cofiño. The conference took place in the Plaza San Martin Hotel in Tegucigalpa, with about 400 people attending.

Rome Presentation of the Harambee Africa Report

On November 10, 2018, the Harambee Africa International report was presented at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Entitled The Role of Higher Education In the Economic And Social Rise Of Sub-Saharan Africa – A Perspective on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and South Africa, the report reflects on the role that higher education can play in fostering social and economic stability, as well as the circumstances that help to explain the “brain drain” being experienced there.

São Paulo, Brazil Performance – Life Coaching for Adolescents

During the 2018 academic year, the Vereda Cultural Center in São Paulo put into action the Performance Project. This is a program aimed at
adolescents to assist them in their human development in the intellectual, social, and emotional realms. Upper class students from various high schools in the metropolitan area took part. They reflected on topics aimed at helping them to grow in self-knowledge and to recognize their own potential as well as their limitations. A parallel program of talks was offered for parents to help them better understand the context of their children’s lives and how to support their growth more effectively.

Bogotá, Colombia 200 volunteers from La Sabana University headed to 2019 WYD in Panama

“You were a great help for the visit of the Holy Father to Colombia and you will also be a great help at World Youth Day in January next year.” With this message, the Cardinal Primate of Colombia, Rubén Salazar, thanked the volunteers from La Sabana for their participation during the “sending forth” Mass which these young people attended. The Mass was celebrated by the auxiliary bishop of Bogotá, Pedro Salamanca. In his homily he invited the young men and women to serve others with joy: “May those who are going as volunteers imbue in the young people attending WYD in Panama a spirit of service and dynamism,” he said. “We are fulfilled when we love: to love is to give, to be of service, to think of others and help them to be better.”

São Paulo, Brazil A Renewal Course for Priests

With the title The Priest in a Post-Modern. Relativistic, and Secularized Culture: Pastoral Perspectives, the tenth edition of the Renewal Course for Priests was held in São Paulo from July 17 to 20. Over 120 priests from 50
dioceses throughout Brazil took part. In the inaugural conference, Cardinal Archbishop Odilo Pedro Sherer of São Paulo insisted on the importance of the topic. Following this, Msgr. Vicente Ancona Lopez, Opus Dei’s regional vicar for Brazil, encouraged those attending to take advantage of those days to grow intellectually and spiritually.

The main course of lectures was given by Msgr. Luis Romera, professor at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. He spoke about the relationship between post-modernity, reason and faith, the secularization that has taken place in recent centuries, and the challenges that today’s society presents to Christianity. Rev. Rafael Stanziona de Moraes, in turn, spoke about relativism, its causes and consequences, and the concepts of laicism and secularism. This was followed by a series of practical sessions in small groups, which provided an opportunity for a broader exchange of ideas. The course ended with a round table discussion on atheism, agnosticism, and indifferentism.

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Valencia, Spain European Award for the Xabec Vocational Training Center

The European Commission, in the context of the European Skills Week held in Vienna (Austria) from 5 – 9 November 2018, gave the Xabec Vocational Training Center the Award for Excellence in Vocational Training. The jury highlighted the percentage of graduates finding work, the innovative teaching methods and the social inclusion of the training program, as well as the international participation and personal guidance offered to its students. Xabec began its activities in 2006 on the occasion of the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá.

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Rome (Italy) Overcoming the Throw-away Culture
Several Latin American business schools took part in a meeting in Rome in October 2018 to reflect on *Business, Growth, and Inclusion*, in light of the Church’s social teaching. The meeting was organized by IPADE (Universidad Panamericana, Mexico) in collaboration with the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, with the participation of business people from Latin America. For the organizers, the main objective was to make professionals aware of the need to better manage their companies so that they become more responsive to human needs. The initiative also sought to contribute to overcoming the “throw-away culture” denounced by Pope Francis, by promoting “the creation of institutions and public policies that foster inclusive economic growth.”

Rome (Italy) Vocational training in low income areas of Rome

On the initiative of the director of the ELIS Vocational Training Center, Pierluigi Bartolomei, in October 2017 a project was launched to provide free vocational training courses, with special attention to young people without economic resources. During the first year, the school took in around 300 students during the day program and 90 in the evening program; many of them are unaccompanied minors living in state institutions. A total of 176 days of practical training were given in the day session (1056 hours) and 154 days (308 hours) in the after-school program.

Naples (Italy) In the soup kitchens of Naples

Three years ago, some friends who attend activities at the Monterone university residence in Naples created a “Whatsapp” group to give others the chance to participate in social and volunteer initiatives. Last year the volunteers helped out at the Mt. Carmel Soup Kitchen, where some 200
meals a day are served in 4 shifts. This year the organizers committed themselves to running the Santa Lucia Soup Kitchen, where about 60 meals are served daily. Over time, many participants in this initiative have learned to see a deeper meaning in their activity as volunteers based on their Christian faith.

Madrid, Spain Jumping Over the Language Barrier

For the past twenty years, the Senara Foundation has been helping people in vulnerable situations, especially in their search for employment. In January, the Fatima project was launched, financed by the European Union’s Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF). The initiative provides Spanish classes and the support of a mentoring network to women from various countries who come to Spain without knowing the language and with little help. The goal is that participants reach a high level in their knowledge of Spanish, certified after an intensive year of 10 hours of classes per week. In addition, each one has the personalized advice of a mentor who supports them in the process of adapting to their new environment.

Japan Volunteering from Taiwan, Macao, and Japan

From August 3 to 17, a social assistance program took place in two cities in the Philippines, carried out by students who attend the apostolic activities at Heshan Residence in Taiwan, Homlan Student Center in Macau, and Yoshida Student Center and Seido Cultural Center in Kyoto and Ashiya, Japan. In Manila, the volunteers engaged in discussions and workshops with children at the Children’s General Hospital in Manila, and accompanied children with cancer and their families at the Bahay Aruga
shelter. The second part of the volunteer project took place on the island of Palawan, where volunteers helped to make repairs on a school and those from Japan gave some classes on their culture and traditions. At the end, the decision was made to form a group to raise funds for the school.

Nairobi, Kenya Britain’s Prime Minister Visits Strathmore

On 30 August 2018 Strathmore Business School received a visit from the British Prime Minister Theresa May. She was accompanied by Kenyan Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta and 29 representatives from various British companies. Taking advantage of the visit, Strathmore invited local representatives, with the aim of establishing contacts and thus facilitating future collaboration. After visiting the university, the Prime Minister expressed her gratitude for the role it was playing in educating young people who will be the country’s future.
IN PACE
In the second half of 2018, 495 faithful of the Prelature died and, besides the priests incardinated in it, 13 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. Suffrages have been offered for all of 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—their family lives, and their social relationships 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.

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.
Discernment is an important topic in spiritual theology. In the classic *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, “discernment of spirits” is seen as embracing a wide variety of questions, including the reasons for a person’s choices and actions, the signs of the times, charisms, inspirations and interior motions, and spiritual accompaniment, among others. [1] A clear premise here is that people are not determined in their choices. Each is faced with the task of discerning their own path in life based on their convictions and concerns. Thus the relevance of discernment stems from its relationship to freedom, which in turn depends on an understanding of practical truth (“what should be done”).

Much has been written about *spiritual discernment*,[2] that is, discernment regarding the life of the spirit and more specifically the Christian life.[3] Pope Francis has used this term in numerous addresses and documents, in a variety of contexts. In particular, he has referred to the vocation of young people, especially in the recent Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*: “A particular form of discernment involves our effort to discover our own vocation.” [4]

In St. Josemaría’s writings and preaching, we find various reflections on the discovery of our Christian vocation, beginning with the recognition that God is calling each person to holiness in a specific path in life. As we will see below, the founder of Opus Dei rarely used the term “discernment” in this context, perhaps because of the breadth of its meaning that we saw above. Nevertheless, this does not prevent his teachings, like those of so many guides in the spiritual life, from shedding light on vocational discernment, a topic that during these months has been at the center of the Church’s reflections. Below we will offer some considerations on
discernment understood as the discovery of each person’s vocation, based on the teachings of St. Josemaría.

1. A new pastoral reality, grounded on the universal call to holiness

In the works of St. Josemaría published up to now, there are many allusions to the discovery of one’s own vocation, while specific references to the concept of discernment (discernimiento and discernir in Spanish) appear only in Conversations with St. Josemaría Escrivá, specifically three times in the same interview (nos. 59 and 70). The statements made there are framed within the universal call to holiness, the core of his preaching.

In the introduction to the critical edition of Conversations, José Luis Illanes explains why the founder of Opus Dei decided to try to make the message of Opus Dei better known by giving interviews in various public media, including the then Osservatore della Domenica, which was linked to official information sources within the Roman Curia and enjoyed special resonance in the Church. [5] Perhaps that is why several references to discernment and discernment of spirits are found there, which isn’t the case in the other interviews granted to publications such as The New York Times or Le Figaro.

The focus, right from the start of the interview, is the vocation of the lay faithful. “The basic characteristic of the development of the laity is new awareness of the dignity of the Christian vocation. God’s call, the character conferred by Baptism, and grace mean that every single Christian can and should be a living expression of the faith. Every Christian should be ‘another Christ, Christ himself,’ [6] present among men.” [7]

St. Josemaría’s message entails a deep understanding of Baptism as a personal call from God, that is, as a vocational path. This focus makes it easier to understand the vocation proper to the lay faithful, as a specific way of contributing to the Church’s holiness and apostolate.[8] The interview stresses that the specific vocation to Opus Dei brings with it a commitment to respond personally to the call to holiness in ordinary life, and to spread the awareness of this universal call. Incorporation in Opus Dei requires a divine vocation; it is not simply an association resulting from the will of the persons involved.[9]
Understanding this specific vocation in the Church requires appreciating the vocation and mission of the laity, which “brings with it a deeper awareness of the Church as a community made up of all the faithful, where all share in one and the same mission, which each should fulfill according to their personal circumstances.” [10] In order to foster awareness of the lay vocation, a new pastoral approach is needed, “aimed at discovering the presence in the midst of the People of God of the charism of holiness and apostolate, in the infinitely varied forms in which God bestows it.” [11] This in turn requires the organic cooperation of the lay faithful with priestly ministers.

This new pastoral program, as demanding as it is necessary, “calls for the supernatural gift of discernment of spirits, for sensitivity towards the things of God, and for the humility of not imposing personal preference upon others and of seconding the inspirations which God arouses in souls. In a word: it means loving the rightful freedom of the sons of God who find Christ, and become bearers of Christ, while following paths which are very diverse but which are all equally divine.”[12]

Priests “must truly be servants of the servants of God,” [13] so that the laity can make Christ present in all sectors of society. “One of the fundamental tasks of the priest is and always will be to give doctrine, to help individuals and society to become aware of the duties which the Gospel imposes on them, and to move men to discern the signs of the time. But all priestly work should be carried out with the maximum respect for the rightful freedom of consciences: every person ought to respond to God freely. And besides, every Catholic, as well as receiving help from the priest, also has lights of his own which he receives from God and a grace of state to carry out the specific mission which, as a person and as a Christian, he has received.”[14] All the faithful are called to carry out this mission, in virtue of the common priesthood received in Baptism.

These words of St. Josemaría present a vision of the Church focused on her mission to bring God to the world. As Pope Francis said, it should be “a Church going out [to the world].” The role of sacred ministers, as “servants of the servants of God,” is to assist the laity and encourage them to discover God’s will, alerting them to their personal responsibility. And
the specific mission and identity of the lay person is to make Christ present in all sectors of society, by responding freely to God’s call.

Below we will consider Christian life as a vocation or personal call from God addressed to each person in Baptism in both its theological implications (sections 2 and 3) and its pastoral ones (sections 4-6)

2. All men and women have a vocation, each his or her own

From a theological point of view, understanding the Christian life as a vocation implies emphasizing that God calls all men and women. All the baptized have a vocation, each person his or her own, and therefore their life acquires meaning as a response to God’s initiative of love. “If you are there in the middle of ordinary life, it doesn’t mean Christ has forgotten about you or hasn’t called you.” [15]

The initiative is always God’s: “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). The Christian vocation is not self-realization, nor a search for getting the most out of life, but an awakening to the concerns of God. Christ has entered our life without asking our permission. “I didn’t think God would get hold of me the way he did either. But let me tell you once again, God doesn’t ask our permission to ‘complicate’ our lives. He just gets in: and that’s that!”[16] Each person can hear the voice of the Spirit and freely guide his or her life in accord with God’s will. This is the key to discernment: where, when, and how God manifests himself in our lives.

God wants all of us to share in Jesus’ mission: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mk 16:15). Therefore a pastoral plan is needed for fostering vocations. But the question then arises: “what right do I have to involve myself in the lives of others?” St. Josemaría’s response is clear: “Because they need it. Without asking our permission, Christ has entered our lives. He did the same with the first disciples.” [17]

The approach to fostering vocations changes substantially in light of the universal call to holiness. If all Christians have a vocation, then the aim of pastoral work in fostering and discerning vocations is not to exclude many people and decide who fits into a specific vocation, but to help each person discover his or her own calling from God. Discernment should not be reduced to who does or does not have a vocation to the religious life or to
the priestly ministry. Rather it is a question of discovering the right path for each person.[18]

Furthermore, the protagonist in discernment is no longer the vocation director or spiritual guide, but rather each person, even though he or she will undoubtedly need advice. Thus each Christian faithful is helped to discern their own path in life and to choose it freely. In the Church many vocations exist that configure the baptismal vocation shared by all men and women: the ministerial priesthood, the consecrated life in its different forms, and the lay life with its various charisms. Which vocation is the best? “For each person, the most perfect thing is, always and only, to do God’s Will.”[19]

Therefore discernment entails the need to listen to both God and to the individual involved when raising the question of a vocation. The one helping another person to discern their vocation—whether a priest, religious, or lay person—should have great sensitivity towards the concerns of God, deep humility so as not to impose one’s own preferences, and the strong desire to assist what God is fostering in each soul. In short, one needs to be moved by love for the legitimate freedom of the children of God.[20] “This way of acting and this spirit are based on respect for the transcendence of revealed truth and on love for the freedom of the human person. I might add that they are also based on a realization that history is undetermined and open to a variety of human options—all of which God respects.”[21]

3. History as salvation [22]

In the third text in Conversations where St. Josemaría speaks explicitly of discernment he says: “Good and evil are mixed in human history, and therefore the Christian should be a person of judgment [“una criatura que sepa discernir” in the original Spanish]. But this judgment [“discernimiento”] should never bring him to deny the goodness of God’s works. On the contrary, it should bring him to recognize the hand of God working through all human actions, even those which betray our fallen nature. You could make a good motto for Christian life out of these words of Saint 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.”[23]
Here discernment is linked to the statement that the world is good, and even holy. St. Josemaría also said in this interview that sanctifying one’s professional work, sanctifying oneself in that work, and contributing to the sanctification of others through one’s profession, is intrinsic to the vocation to Opus Dei, as part of God’s plan for salvation.

This statement about the world is also a statement about the human person’s freedom and action in the world. History is the place of salvation because it results from the incarnation of Jesus Christ and from the freedom of the children of God assisted by divine grace.[24] Divine filiation—the assurance that God is our Father—leads to a deep contemplative and mystical vision of daily events that enables us to recognize the divine manifested in the human.[25]

Vocation is thus seen in the light of a God who is Father and who manifests his love in history, and therefore requires the response of our personal freedom.[26] St. Josemaría views the life of each person with deep trust in the providence of a God who is Father and who cares for his children.[27]

History is seen as a dynamic reality where God the Father intervenes first, and then the human person with the use of his or her freedom. History is shaped by the personal decisions that are inspired by divine love. “If you ask me how the divine call is perceived, how one becomes aware of it, I would say that it is a new outlook on life. It is as though a new light is lit within us; it is a mysterious impelling force, that pushes a person to dedicate his or her noblest energies to an activity which, through practice, becomes second nature. That vital force, somewhat like an avalanche sweeping all before it, is what others call vocation.”[28]

4. Importance of formation

A number of pastoral consequences stem from this view of vocation. If we start from the premise that everyone has a vocation—each person his or her own—and that God manifests himself in history, but always counting on our personal freedom, then it is clear why we need to let the Holy Spirit act. To set out to discover one’s own vocation and apostolic mission requires, therefore, acquiring a deep Christian formation.
St. Josemaría was convinced of the importance of offering a deep formation to all types of persons as a premise for responding to our Lord’s call. Referring specifically to the institution he founded by divine inspiration, he said that it was a “great work of catechesis.” [29] In the Instruction for the Work of St. Raphael on Opus Dei’s apostolic work with young people, he states clearly that the immediate aim of this apostolic effort is the Christian formation of young people, while the secondary aim is to form those who, from among this broader group, will be able to receive the vocation to carry out the apostolic mission of the Work, whether in celibacy or marriage.[30]

An essential guideline for this formation is educating people in freedom. The formative environment fostered by the founder of Opus Dei presupposes a delicate respect for each person’s privacy. Hence the need to create a climate of trust that allows each soul to unleash the energy of his or her personal freedom without falling into hypocritical or narrow-minded behavior. That is why it is based on friendship, which makes it easier to help people “to direct their efforts and to carry out their projects properly, teaching them to consider things and to reason them out. It is not a matter of imposing a line of conduct, but rather of showing the human and supernatural motives for it … there is no real education without personal responsibility, and there is no responsibility without freedom.” [31]

As we said above, in all formation the most important action is God’s. Those who help to form others—and, in this context, to help them discern God’s will—need to cultivate a humility that leads to recognizing the primacy of the Spirit, who uses them as instruments in his hands. Therefore in order to carry out this mission, the starting point is one’s own interior life: to be Eucharistic souls, [32] since it is a supernatural sowing.[33]

In another of his Instructions,[34] St. Josemaría emphasizes even more forcefully the care needed to provide adequate formation for those who join Opus Dei as numeraries or associates. The starting point is always the desire to bring all souls closer to Christ, helping each one to discover their own vocation.[35] The formation that these faithful of Opus Dei receive is at the service of their mission. Hence the founder stresses that sanctity in
the middle of the world, because of its rich human and divine content, entails the need to form oneself with a special depth.[36]

The pastoral work with those who sense a call to Opus Dei requires helping them acquire a strong piety, a deep doctrinal knowledge of the faith, and solid human virtues needed to sanctify their profession or job and carry out their apostolic mission.[37] St. Josemaría often spoke about five key areas of formation: human, doctrinal-religious, spiritual, professional and apostolic. This formation is “the foundation of your life as souls dedicated to Jesus Christ.” [38]

5. A free personal choice [39]

As a person’s formation deepens, a moment of maturing comes when, under the impulse of grace, each one confronts their entire future and the commitments needed to follow their own path in the Church. This moment is usually accompanied by two psychological states: an uneasiness and an attraction.

As in our Lady’s life—“she was greatly troubled by these words” (Lk 1, 29)—a vocational call is often accompanied by unrest, the awareness of having received a specific task in life. Without the need for any extraordinary supernatural manifestations, a person becomes aware, with simplicity, that something has happened. God breaks into our daily events and speaks without words through the human mediation of a friend or a priest, or circumstances such as a book entering one’s life or an event. This psychological experience can lead to uneasiness or even to fear, along with a longing to accomplish great things in life. God “acts through those inner inspirations, which begin by taking away a bit of our comfort and tranquility.” [40]

A person becomes aware of being called to a mission, with the opportunity to direct one’s life to a higher goal. Often this is motivated by the attraction of the lives of others who are following the same path in their own life.

St. Josemaría valued the silent witness of upright behavior, but he knew it was not enough. Each person needs to diligently strive to lead others to Christ though their prayer and example, and their convincing and encouraging words.[41] Hence he liked to use a forceful expression found
in the Gospels: *compelle intrare*, “compel people to come in” (*Lk* 14:23). This requires accompanying people in an encouraging way, always in the context of authentic friendship. It is “an invitation, helping the person to make up their mind, and never—not even remotely—a coercion.” This attraction “is not a material push but an abundance of light, of doctrine; the spiritual stimulus of your prayer and your work, which bears authentic witness to doctrine; all the small sacrifices you offer; the smile that comes to your lips because you are children of God; your human bearing and charm.” [42]

Although God may intervene with a sudden illumination, or a person may sense a natural desire to embrace a certain form of Christian life, the normal path for discovering one’s vocation is reason illumined by faith and moved by charity.[43] The first recourse is always prayer. [44] Reflecting on the truth that we have been created to love God, meditating on the Gospels, considering the ways of life authorized by the Church, seeking the best path in order to serve God, the Church and all men and women, in light of one’s personal qualities and talents. Naturally, a clarity of vision and intention is not always present right from the start of an authentic vocation, but it is important to achieve this during the period of trial that every life given to God involves.

With this awareness of God’s call, the person feels challenged to discern the signs of God’s will in their life: striving to grow in their faith and deepen their relationship with God; considering the possible paths in the Church and the people whose example they are drawn to; reflecting on the “coincidences” in their life that have put them in a particular place and time; the personal qualities they possess and can employ in the service of others; and above all, the inspirations received in their prayer. In short, reflecting on their own experience, since God makes use of each one’s life story to manifest himself.

6. Discerning one’s vocation

Vocational discernment requires a deep understanding of the nature of the vocation to which each person senses a call, along with the necessary qualities for making its ideals a reality in their own life and the right intention to act out of love for God.[45]
Regarding the first aspect, St. Josemaría asks: what are the special characteristics of the vocation to the Work? And he replies: “A definitive state of seeking perfection in the middle of the world,” similar to the life of the first Christians, grounded on the practice of the virtues. And he adds: “we do not take anyone out of their place.”

Discernment is also needed to ensure that the person is acting with a right intention, which is not always easy to establish; and also to determine where best to employ the talents that each one has received. Both discernment by the person concerned (assisted by spiritual accompaniment) and ecclesial discernment of the suitability of the candidate are needed.

(a) **A right intention**

Vocational discernment is also concerned with the person’s right intention: what he or she really wants and loves. The decision to follow a specific path should depend directly and exclusively on love for God. Since egocentrism is a frequent defect, a person is wise to accept advice in evaluating the uprightness of their intention. A vocational path is chosen with the commitment to follow it forever out of love for God, to help build up the Church.

Thus the response to a vocation should stem from the desire to serve God, “because I want to,” and not be the result of a calculation of personal benefits. It should be a choice made out of love that leads to recognizing one’s responsibility for the Church and for the salvation of all men and women. This is the vocational question: deciding to commit one’s life to God in order to build up the Church and society in a specific way. Personal maturity is attained by rising from the “I” to the “we,” insofar as the person takes responsibility for others. United to Christ in the Spirit, one truly decides to help bring about the redemption. The person takes on this mission through a specific and determined path, presented here and now through the Church.

Accompaniment means giving each person the help needed so that they can freely decide to undertake their path in life, relying on the Church’s human and divine experience. The role of the spiritual director is “to help the person to truly want to do God’s will,” This requires “helping each person to face up to all the demands in their life and to discover what God
wants from each person in particular—without in any way limiting that holy independence and blessed personal responsibility which are the features of a Christian conscience.” [51]

It is essential here to get to know each person very well and help them to truly know themselves. Only in this way can the person concerned really decide, with a knowledge of their weaknesses but also with a strong hope. Hence one needs to consider the person’s intention and motives, and therefore the right intention of their vocation. [52] This right intention is clearly required in both the person involved and in the one accompanying them in their choice.

The decision to follow a vocation stems from the person’s freedom as a response to God’s love. Every vocation in the Church is exclusively a response of love. A path is chosen in order to help carry out the Church’s mission, taking into account its diversity. But the reason for the choice is always love, and not simply “this has to be done,” “so I can be saved,” etc. It is a response to God who comes to meet us.

(b) The person’s suitability

A vocation involves the free offering of one’s life for love and with love, in the priesthood, in the religious state, or in the lay life. No one is excluded a priori from a specific path; one’s personal biography points to the most suitable path for each person. [53] All men and women have the possibility of embarking on a life of service and complete self-giving. [54] The Christian vocation received through Baptism is made specific through personal and ecclesial discernment, and can be a call to marriage or to apostolic celibacy. The beauty of the vocation to marriage is stressed by the Church, as well as the beauty of celibacy for the kingdom of heaven. [55]

The vocation to Opus Dei implies having the qualities required by this specific path and mission, in order to make love for God and neighbor the driving force of one’s actions and attitudes in daily life. In short, it requires that the person be mature and well-formed humanly and spiritually. St. Josemaría gave some guidelines for getting to know the person in depth, each one’s aptitudes and qualities. He stressed that each person should possess the qualities and social standing needed to be able to radiate Christ’s charity in their own environment (which can be quite varied); also
it is important to know the circumstances of each one’s family background, childhood and adolescence that shape one’s character; and above all, the virtues each one possesses, the good habits that make possible sound judgment and decision making, and the carrying out of an ideal in life.  

St. Josemaría also said that there is room in Opus Dei for “all those who have a big heart, even if they have had greater weaknesses,” while the selfish, lukewarm or frivolous would fail to fit in it. The capacity to love generously is highlighted as the only indispensable quality, which, over time and thanks to formation, will give rise to virtues that make the vocational commitment effective.

Discernment includes a judgment about a person’s aptitudes and suitability. This involves the qualities a person possesses now, and not in the more or less distant future. One’s future involves a growth that requires corresponding to God’s grace. But each person needs to employ all of their talents, as St. Matthew’s parable teaches us (25:14-30). Nothing can be held back; every corner of one’s life needs to bear fruit: “When they talked to him about committing himself personally, his reaction was to reason in the following manner: ‘If I did, I could do that... I would have to do this other...’ The answer he got was: ‘Here, we don’t bargain with the Lord. The law of God, the invitation of the Lord, is something you either take or leave, just as it is. You need to make up your mind: go forward, fully decided and without holding back; otherwise, go away. Qui non est mecum... Whoever is not with Me is against Me.’”

**Conclusion: Fidelity to the vocation**

Since the vocation is lived out in time, only in living it is the person’s suitability fully verified. This involves both personal and ecclesial discernment, which are parallel paths since their origin is the same: God’s love for each man and woman.

St. Josemaría understood the vocation in this way. Therefore he followed the Church’s tradition when he established, for the specific call to Opus Dei, special times of discernment, temporal incorporations until the definitive incorporation, to emphasize the freedom of each person in his or her self-giving.
This process of discernment is grounded, first of all, on the person's freedom. The response to a vocation is the free choice of a commitment made out of love, in response to a divine initiative, to the action of God. And since grace assumes and elevates all that is human, the response needs to mature over time. Hence formation is required, as a consequence of the interplay between freedom, grace and each person's life.

A vocation is part of each person's life story; it is the fruit of a free response to the gifts that God freely offers. Hence everything depends on God and everything on oneself, on the specific decisions taken, on the struggle today-and-now that makes possible future advances. Thus it is also clear why to change one's path, when one has already begun on it, requires justification. Every decision or choice requires justification, but this justification needs to be directed towards God and not towards oneself. And it needs to be totally free: because one truly wants to, the person takes a stance in life directed towards God and not towards one's own will or self-love.

"Vocation leads us, without realizing it, to take a stance in life which we will maintain eagerly and joyfully, filled with hope until the moment of death itself. It is something that gives a sense of mission to work, that dignifies and gives value to our existence. Jesus authoritatively comes into the soul, into yours and mine; that is what vocation means." [62]

The first decision, the first step in the vocation, requires a sustained correspondence over time. Realizing that one still has a long way to go to configure one's life in accord with the divine call should be an invitation to decide again to give one's life to God. It is true that the ideal then can appear to be costly, and disillusionment can try to worm its way in, with a stronger feeling of going against the grain. It is in this scenario that crises can arise. At times, these crises can take on a positive meaning if they are transformed into crises of growth. But the sad possibility also exists of going backwards, looking back to the past.

The peace and joy of one's self-giving is a sign that the right path has been undertaken. Crises often involve a darkening of this peace and joy, as a consequence of following one's feelings. But these moments of darkness and trial, when the joy of a life given to God grows weak or the reasons of
the intellect and the decisions of the will that had led to the happiness of the vocation become clouded, can help to purify us and lead to a deeper trust in God and a stronger self-abandonment.

The struggle between love for God and disordered self-love is permanent. The key for discerning one’s path is: am I going towards God, towards a more mature opening to others and a more realistic love, or am I closing in on myself and withdrawing, following my own will? Therefore, as Pope Francis said, the great question of discernment is not who you are but who you are for.[63] The gospel guideline is “by their fruits you will know them.” Our feelings are not what is paramount. Guided by love for God, each person needs to educate their feelings and grow in freedom through a daily self-giving to others.

[1] See the extensive article Discernement des esprits, in vol. 3 of the above-mentioned Dictionnaire, col. 1222-1291 (by different authors, depending on the various parts: J. Guillet, G. Bardy, F. Vandenbroucke, H. Martin, and J. Pegon).

[2] In addition to the previous article, a good summary can be seen in Manuel Ruiz Jurado, El discernimiento espiritual, BAC 1994.


[6] This Christological formula referring to each Christian is essential in the teaching of St. Josemaría: see Antonio Aranda, El cristiano “alter
Christus, ipse Christus” en el pensamiento del beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Scripta Theologica 26 (1994), 513-570.

[7] Conversations, no. 58. This interview for L’Osservatore della Domenica is entitled “Opus Dei: an Association which fosters the Search for Holiness in the World.”


[9] “We are here [in Opus Dei] because God has called us, with a personal and special vocation.” St. Josemaría, Letter, February 14, 1944, no. 1; cited in Fernando Ocáriz, Opus Dei in the Church, Four Courts Press, 93. Although St. Josemaría is referring here specifically to the faithful of Opus Dei, his teachings are useful for all Christians, since they are based on the universal call to holiness inherent to Baptism.

[10] Conversations, no. 59. These truths capture very well the core of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching on the Church and her mission: see Lumen Gentium, nos. 39-40 and Apostolicam Actuositatem, nos. 2 and 4.


[12] Ibid.

[13] “Servants of the servants of God” is an expression often used to refer to the Popes. In his homily A Priest Forever, St. Josemaría said, referring to those about to be ordained: “They will be ordained, to serve.” He sees the priestly ministry as service: service to God, to the Church, and to all men and women.


[18] St. Josemaría was looking for a new term to explain this reality, this call or calling, because at the time he wrote The Way, vocation was seen
as being exclusive to priests and religious (see The Way: Critical-historical Edition, commentary on point 27).


[23] Conversations, no. 70.

[24] “God the Father, in the fullness of time, sent his only-begotten Son to take flesh in Mary ever Virgin, through the Holy Spirit, and re-establish peace. In this way, by redeeming man from sin, ‘we receive adoption as sons’ (Gal 4:5). We become capable of sharing the intimacy of God. In this way the new man, the new line of the children of God (see Rom 6:4-5), is enabled to free the whole universe from disorder, restoring all things in Christ (see Eph. 1:9-10), as they have been reconciled with God.” (St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 183) Here we have a summary of his understanding of history and of the Christian’s role in the world.

[25] “Precisely because we are children of God, we can contemplate in love and wonder everything as coming from the hands of our Father, God the Creator. And so we become contemplatives in the middle of the world, loving the world.” (St. Josemaría, Christ Is Passing By, no. 65)


[27] “Open your own hearts to Jesus and tell him your story. I don’t want to generalize” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 1).


[32] See St. Josemaría, *Instrucción sobre el modo de hacer proselitismo*, April 1, 1934, no. 3. The word “proselytism” is derived from “proselyte,” which in the Bible refers to someone who, coming from another people, was prepared to accept the Jewish faith. The Church took up this word analogically. St. Justin, for example, spoke of “proselytizing” to refer to the apostolic mission of Christians, directed to the whole world (see *Mk* 16:15). Many spiritual authors, including St. Josemaría, have used the term “proselytism” in this sense, as a synonym for apostolate or evangelization: a work characterized, among other things, by a profound respect for freedom, in contrast to the negative meaning that this word has taken on in recent years. St. Josemaría used the word “proselytism” with the meaning of a proposal or invitation with which Christians share Christ’s call with their companions and friends, and open before them the horizon of his Love.

[33] In the same *Instruction* cited in the previous footnote, St. Josemaría recalled that, in the early years of Opus Dei’s apostolic work, the custom was “not to speak about the Work to any person, without considering the matter slowly in prayer” (no. 11), to ask, “with prayer and sacrifice, for abundant grace from Heaven” (no. 12), and to pray to the person’s guardian angel (no. 13).
St. Josemaría always understood a vocation in terms of freedom: the freedom of the person, which truly shapes one’s vocation and history, both personal and collective. We have to keep in mind that it is really God who calls. The choice involves accepting God’s gift. Freedom is the response out of love to a call that is the expression of God’s love. Call and response give rise to a process of grace and freedom that shapes the life of every human being.

The difficulty of the subject lies in the concept of freedom that we have received since modern times. Freedom as absolute autonomy of the will has its roots in Luther (autonomy of belief), Kant (autonomy of thought), and Marx (autonomy of action). This view of freedom stems from the emancipatory ideal that was born with Modernity and that can be summed up as the pretension to make oneself exclusively with one’s own strength, without depending on anything or anyone (see Joseph Ratzinger, in *Truth and Tolerance*, Ignatius Press: San Francisco 2004; Romano Guardini, *Mundo y persona. Ensayos para una teoría cristiana del hombre*, Madrid, Ediciones Encuentro, 2014, pp. 15-43). In the most extreme version of this conception, freedom, in order to be real, should confront God, reject him, or even “kill him” as Nietzsche will say. Only without God can one be free, they think.

It is difficult for someone with this false idea of freedom to understand the meaning of the freedom that the saints intuit in its fullness: the vocation of each person is the vocation to freedom, to the true freedom of children of God, for which Christ has set us free. There is full harmony between freedom and grace, not opposition; there is full harmony between the freedom of the person and the plan of salvation freely willed by God. The only opposition comes from the sin that enslaves us. This very direct relationship between truth, freedom, and divine filiation can be seen in St.

[40] This was St. Josemaría’s answer to the question: How can we be sure that our vocation is this or that? *Notes from a Family Get-together*, May 26, 1974: taken from José Luis Soria, *Maestro de buen humor*, Rialp, Madrid 1994, p. 85.

[41] After praying and having others pray, the topic is then raised “as something possible, as a hypothesis, the need for the apostolate that we are carrying out” (*Instrucción sobre el modo de hacer proselitismo*, no. 15).


[44] For example, St. Josemaría advised some young people who were considering a vocation to Opus Dei to pray to the Holy Spirit for three days, asking for light: see José Luis González Gullón, *DYA*, Rialp 2016, 95-96.


[49] “I opt for God because I want to, freely, without compulsion of any kind. And I undertake to serve, to convert my whole life into a means of serving others, out of love for my Lord Jesus.” (St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 35)

[51] St. Josemaría, Christ is Passing By, no. 99.

[52] In the Instrucción sobre el modo de hacer proselitismo, St. Josemaría deals with some examples related to a person’s rectitude of intention, and offers some practical judgments based on personal experience and the psychology of the spiritual life: nos. 44, 46, 50, 54-61.

[53] An example of how St. Josemaría recognized a variety of paths, all with a vocational sense, can be seen in the multiday workshops that he organized for a number of young people who he thought might have a vocation to the Work in the marriage state. Some discovered their vocation to Opus Dei in marriage, others in apostolic celibacy. See Luis Cano, “Los primeros supernumerarios. La convivencia de 1948,” Studia et Documenta 12 (2018), 251-302.


[55] St. Josemaría also explained the vocation of lay faithful in this way, both in marriage and in celibacy: see Conversations, no. 92.

[56] See Instrucción sobre el modo de hacer proselitismo, nos. 63-64.

[57] Ibid., no. 66: in Andrés Vázquez de Prada, The Founder of Opus Dei I, Scepter 2001, 444.

[58] St. Josemaría, Furrow, no. 9.

[59] “The decision must be tested on the facts in view of its confirmation. Time is of the essence in order to verify the effective orientation of the decision taken.” Synod of Bishops, Preparatory Document for the XV Ordinary General Assembly “Young people, faith and vocational discernment,” January 13, 2017.

[60] See Statutes of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, nos. 17-27. A Spanish translation of this document is available at https://opusdei.org/es/article....

[61] “Our calling discloses to us the meaning of our existence. It means
being convinced, through faith, of the reason for our life on earth. Our life, the present, past and future, acquires a new dimension, a depth we did not perceive before. All happenings and events now fall within their true perspective: we understand where God is leading us, and we feel ourselves borne along by this task entrusted to us.” (Christ Is Passing By, no. 45)

[62] St. Josemaría, Letter, January 9, 1932, no. 9; cited in Fernando Ocáriz, Opus Dei in the Church, Four Courts Press 1994, p. 86. These words refer to the specific vocation to Opus Dei, but they apply to every vocation to holiness in ordinary life.

[63] “You can keep asking, ‘Who am I?’ for the rest of your lives. But the real question is: ‘For whom am I?’ Of course, you are for God. But he has decided that you should also be for others, and he has given you many qualities, inclinations, gifts and charisms that are not for you, but to share with those around you.” (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, Christus vivit, no. 286)