

your affection; and then, because late last night I received a message from Rome informing me that one of the first persons that I sent to Italy to do Opus Dei had died. A clean soul, a lofty intelligence....”

Now, from heaven, Blessed Josemaría is following your steps closely and offers you his constant help: in your work, in your suffering and sickness, in your joys and sorrows, in your difficulties. If you seek his intercession, this saint, who is your fellow citizen, will transmit to you his love for God, his enthusiasm and joy, and also his holy zeal, which is so necessary on the path of sanctity.

Entrust yourself to this universal Barbastran. Go to him in friendship, especially when you feel yourself weakening on the road towards heaven and in your love for Jesus. He will always sustain you, and encourage you to take hold of the gentle and powerful hand of Our Lady of Torreciudad. “To Jesus,” he wrote in *The Way*, “we always go, and to him we always return, through Mary.”

Rome

October 24, 2002

At the inauguration of the academic year of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Your excellencies; my dear professors, students and staff of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to begin by recalling once again the recent canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. I have no need to emphasize the great joy of that day in St. Peter’s Square (because I am sure that many of you had the same experience as I did) when the Holy Father inscribed Blessed Josemaría among the number of the saints. To borrow an expression from my predecessor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, that day, so long and prayerfully awaited, was like “drowning in a sea of joy.”

But it is not my intention to describe my gratitude to God and to our Holy Father John Paul II, but rather to reflect with you on the significance that this event should have for us, as persons closely related to this university. I am certain that, just as for the Prelature of Opus Dei, the canonization of its founder will always remain a decisive moment in the history of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, born from the spirit of Saint Josemaría.

These recent days remind us once again that sanctity is the only worthwhile goal for our life, the only objective able to fill it with meaning. This was the untiring refrain of the preaching of Saint Josemaría, recognized by the Holy Father on the morning of October 7 as “the saint of the ordinary.”¹

The congress celebrated last January on the occasion of the centennial of Saint Josemaría’s birth, entitled

1. See John Paul II, Address at the audience for the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá, October 7, 2002.

“The Greatness of Ordinary Life,” helped us to go deeper into the beauty and fruitfulness of his message, always old and always new, like the Gospel itself on which it is based. Whatever the work that occupies us, in whatever circumstances, God calls us to holiness. The tasks and jobs that we carry out in this world, in the most diverse situations, should always be understood in reference to the goal of growing in intimacy with God. Otherwise we have missed the right path. As the Holy Father said in his greeting to the participants in that congress: “If a person fails to welcome the grace of God within him, if he fails to pray, if he fails to receive the sacraments frequently, if he does not strive for sanctity, he loses the very meaning of his earthly pilgrimage.”²

Therefore, I do not hesitate to tell you, with all the strength that characterized Saint Josemaría’s preaching, that if your work of research, or study, or duties in this university don’t help you to grow in holiness, if they don’t help you to mature in your vocation as children of God, then they are of very little worth. In connection with this, there comes to mind an episode in the life of Saint Josemaría on the occasion of his visit to another university born of his apostolic zeal: the University of Navarre. In the course of that visit, a professor in the School of Medicine referred to their intense years of work in starting the university: “Father, you asked us to start a university—and we’ve done it!” Although he knew

well the brief history of that university and appreciated the sacrifice and effort of all those who had worked there, when he heard these words Saint Josemaría answered: “I didn’t ask you to start a university, but to become holy by starting a university.”

My desire and my petition to God, through the intercession of Saint Josemaría, is that this deep truth resound always in the corridors, classrooms and offices of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. In the intimacy of your hearts may you never cease to hear his demanding and affectionate words: “We have to become saints, as they say in my part of the world, ‘down, to the last whisker,’ Christians who are truly and genuinely such, the kind that could be canonized. If not, we shall have failed as disciples of the one and only Master.”³

Let us never forget that what the Church and the world truly need are persons deeply determined to become saints: Christians from every walk of life who seek intimacy with God in all the circumstances of their lives. If we see sanctity as the only true goal of our existence, I am sure that we will attain all our other goals, even the most pressing ones that we confront each day.

Christian hope, as Saint Josemaría’s life and preaching teach us, is the most solid foundation for all our human hopes. God’s grace makes use

2. John Paul II, Address to the participants in the congress “The Greatness of Ordinary Life.”

3. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, no. 5.

of the efforts of everyone to construct, day by day, a university capable of responding ever more effectively to the needs of the Church in its evangelizing mission.

The expression used by that beloved professor, “to start a university,” reminds me of the discomfort you may have to put up with during the next few years, while this edifice is being renovated. While I hope this provisional situation will be as brief as possible, all of us for some time will feel ourselves very much involved in the task of “constructing a university.” The need for this restoration work is evident to everyone, in order to prepare a more suitable site

for you and for the students who will come here to study. We should try to show our gratitude to the construction workers, praying for them and for their families. Your patience and sacrifices will benefit many people in the future, and also yourselves, if you never forget to seek, before all else, the glory of God. Besides, as Saint Josemaría used to say, how beautiful it is to plant trees whose shade others will enjoy!

Invoking for everyone the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sedes Sapientiae and Queen of the Rosary, and the intercession of Saint Josemaría, I declare the Academic Year 2002-2003 opened.

Articles and interviews

MISNA

October 3, 2002

Interview carried out by Federico Mandillo for the MISNA news agency

1. *Africa is present in the news above all because of its great human tragedies: its millions of refugees, the widespread AIDS crisis, the endless wars, especially in the tropical areas. Opus Dei will soon celebrate the canonization of its founder. What initiatives is it promoting to give rise to new hope in the African countries with the most problems? How can*

solidarity be fostered between the northern and southern hemispheres?

The most important work of the Prelature is that which each of its faithful carries out personally, with freedom and responsibility, in his own surroundings and circumstances. The African faithful of Opus Dei, who thanks be to God already number several thousand, try first of all (like the Asians, the Americans, the Europeans) to live their faith fully. And part of this effort involves promoting, shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues and friends, projects aimed at solving the material and spiritual needs