

Establishment of New Centers of the Prelature

The vicars of the Prelate have established new centers of the Prelature in the following locations:

Auckland, New Zealand, two centers; Buenos Aires, Argentina;

Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines; La Coruña, Spain; Davao City, Philippines; Hengelo, Netherlands; Madrid, Spain; Montevideo, Uruguay, two centers; Rome, Italy; Sydney, Australia.

Priestly Ordinations

On Sunday, June 7, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, ordained as priests 12 deacons of the Prelature from six countries: Argentina, Brazil, Kenya, the Philippines, Spain and Uruguay. The ceremony took place in the Basilica of St. Eugene in Rome.

The new priests are: Emmanuel Abaya Garrido, Alejandro Chemello Schnitzler, Carlos María González Saracho, Marcos Adelino

Cordero de Lima, José Luis López Carpio, José Antonio Manterola Aldaz, Francisco José Martínez López, Manuel Mira Iborra, Luijino Miungi Kiriinya, Joaquín Paniello Peiró, Flavio Sampaio de Paiva and Juan Ignacio Vaquero Marín.

Of the new priests, three are engineers, two philologists, one historian, two lawyers, two economists, a journalist and a physicist.

Pastoral letter January 1, 1998

On the occasion of the beginning of the second year of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Prelate of Opus Dei directed the following pastoral letter to the faithful of the Prelature.

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

*Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto, ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.*¹
With the whole Church, we pray these words in the Creed at Mass, thereby professing our faith in the incarnation of the Son of God in the most pure womb of the Virgin Mary, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Nicene Creed.

During these days we recall his birth in Bethlehem, the central event in human history, since by bringing us salvation, it marked the entrance of God's eternity into time. "In becoming man, the Word of God brought about a fundamental change in the very condition of time. We can say that in Christ *human time was filled with eternity*.

"This transformation touches the destiny of all humanity, since 'by his Incarnation, He, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man' (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22). He came to offer everyone participation in his divine life."²

We do well to recall this now, as we begin the second year, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, in preparation for the Jubilee of the year 2000. We are not preparing merely to commemorate the passage from one century to the next, from one millenium to another, but rather the specific moment when the Son of God descended with his infinite Love "from his heavenly life to the abyss of human existence," moved "by his desire to fulfil the Father's plan in total self-giving."³

The Incarnation of the Word in Mary's womb *perpetuae virginitatis*, as the Liturgy sings,⁴ a manifestation of God's unbounded Charity for each and every person, is attributed to the Holy Spirit: subsistent Love uniting the Father and the Son, uncreated

Gift and source of all gifts, the Guest of our soul. Only by surrendering our entire existence to Him once and again, in each moment and circumstance, second by second, can we hope to correspond, even though very poorly, to such great generosity and love.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ came into the world, and thanks to Him, divine Life is constantly poured into our hearts through grace.⁵ As the Holy Father Pope John Paul II points out, we cannot prepare for the great Jubilee "in any other way than *in the Holy Spirit*. What was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit 'in the fullness of time' can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church."⁶

We are thus invited to rediscover more deeply the divine Paraclete's presence and action in the world, in the Church, in our own life and in that of others, and to steep ourselves in the Life that is so abundantly offered us. This divine self-giving is very dear to the children of God, and I dare to say particularly to his children in Opus Dei, since veneration for the third Person of the Blessed Trinity "*was an intrinsic part of the Work right from the beginning*."⁷ Blessed Josemaría Escrivá put great love into this devotion, especially from the moment when God placed in his soul the seed of

2. John Paul II, General Audience, December 10, 1997.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Mass December 17, Collect .

5. Cf. *Rom* 5:5.

6. John Paul II, Enc. *Dominum et Vivificantem*, May 18, 1986, no. 51; cf. Apost. Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, November 10, 1994, no. 44.

7. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *Get-together*, September 9, 1971.

Opus Dei. How often he told us that the Paraclete had guided him by his inspirations, since he had no other teacher for his spiritual way! And he used to add, *I would be very sorry if you were to lose this devotion, which can never disappear in Opus Dei, to each of the three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the "Great Unknown" who is the Holy Spirit.*⁸

This year we have to make a special effort to strengthen our devotion to the Paraclete by our personal response, and to help many others to get to know him and deal with him. Thus we will very effectively contribute to making the current of divine Life that is constantly poured out over the world, especially in the womb of the Church, more powerful and fruitful. For "just as crystalline objects, when touched by a ray of sunlight, themselves become resplendent and shine forth, so also the souls in whom the Spirit dwells are illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and themselves become spiritual and send grace to others."⁹

The Paraclete reproduces the image of Christ in souls. In the divine plan, the Son is to be the *First-born among many brethren.*¹⁰ Thanks to the Holy Spirit, if we do not place obstacles in his way, God the Father "discovers" in each Christian the features of his dearly beloved Son, and he recognizes us as true sons and daughters of his. The Paraclete brings us to sa-

vor our divine filiation ever more deeply, and moves us to cry out, *Abba, Father!*¹¹ as we saw in our founder's life. With his help, we will be able to follow closely in Christ's footsteps: both those he took when walking the paths of men, and those he wants to take in our existence, as he constantly walks alongside us.

Years ago, our Father told us, *our Lord is passing by very close to you. I know it, even though you don't realize it. He passes by quasi in occulto (Jn 7:10).*¹² Now, from heaven, he is telling each of us this once again. Let us listen to him! When he told us this years ago, he was referring to a special "passing by" of our Lord in his life, marked by the heavy but lovable weight of the Cross, which is the guarantee of having found Christ. But he was also referring to Christ's daily presence alongside his brothers and sisters, which we have to learn to discover. And so he added that our Lord, *without hiding, is in your heart, in those small battles which perhaps are not so small and which sometimes you make bigger with your foolishness, as I also do.*¹³

On beginning the new year, and casting a glance back over the one just finished, there come to our mind, with sorrow of love, the moments when we have not known how to fully discover the face of our Redeemer, who came out to meet us weighed down with the Cross of sickness, misunderstanding, or lack of means,

8. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *Get-together*, January 31, 1971.

9. St. Basil, *Liber de Spiritu Sancto*, 9, 23.

10. *Rom* 8:29.

11. Cf *Rom* 8:15; *Gal* 4:6.

12. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *Get-together*, January 4, 1971.

13. *Ibid.*

asking us to join Him in expiation, hoping for a more refined interior purification or a more determined effort in our ascetical struggle. We will have asked forgiveness for the times when we have not been attentive or have not recognized that it was He, Jesus, who was seeking us out.¹⁴ And we will have given thanks for those other occasions when, docile to the Paraclete's inspirations, we have followed him. In any case, it is good to begin this new stage with renewed desires to discover God's passage alongside us. *Vultum tuum, Domine, requiram!*¹⁵ We invoke him with the eagerness to discover him and to love him more each day, in daily happenings, and above all in the persons closer to us.

Therefore, my daughters and sons, let us beg the Holy Spirit for his gifts, which will make us sensitive to Christ's nearness and help us to respond generously to divine Love. What invocations do we direct to him? Do we seek the Paraclete's protection when fulfilling the Norms? Do we strive to discover in the Holy Mass his silent but very effective activity, which enables us to unite our small sacrifices to Christ's eternal self-offering? Do the words of praise that we repeat so frequently every day come from our heart: *Glorify be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*? Do we have recourse to the Holy Spirit when we pray the Angelus, in order to re-live deeply that sublime scene of our salvation?

Let us listen to the Holy Father once again: "The primary tasks of the preparation for the Jubilee thus include *a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit*, who acts within the Church both in the sacraments, especially in Confirmation, and in the variety of charisms, roles and ministries which he inspires for the good of the Church."¹⁶ It is only natural, then, that in our personal apostolate and apostolic undertakings we count above all on the consoling reality that the Paraclete works unceasingly for the sanctification of souls, even though ordinarily he acts silently. He is "in our own day too, *the principal agent of the new evangelization*. . . , the One who builds the Kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ, stirring people's hearts and quickening in our world the seeds of the full salvation which will come at the end of time."¹⁷ Let us be convinced that if we have recourse with faith to the third Person, he will place on our lips the right words, the appropriate suggestion, holy intransigence in the face of erroneous behavior: and the hearts of these persons will be moved!

This is a good year, my daughters and sons, to decide to seek with holy stubbornness conversation with the Holy Spirit, present in our hearts through grace! For as Blessed Josemaría also taught us, *God is not only passing by; he also remains in us. To express it in some way, he is in the center of our soul in grace, giving a supernatural*

14. Cf *Via Crucis*, 5th station.

15. *Ps* 27(26):8.

16. Apost. Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, November 10, 1994, no. 45.

17. *Ibid.*

*meaning to our actions, as long as we do not resist and expel him by sin. God is hidden in you and in me, in each one.*¹⁸

Let us make the Holy Father's prayer our own: "O Holy Spirit, most sweet guest of hearts: show us the deep meaning of the great Jubilee and prepare our spirit to celebrate it with faith, with the hope that does not deceive, with the charity that does not seek its own advantage. Spirit of truth, you who know the depths of God, memory and prophecy of the Church: guide mankind so that it recognizes in Jesus of Nazareth the Lord of glory, the Savior of the world, the culminating moment of history."¹⁹

What consequences should we draw from the certainty that the Holy Spirit acts unceasingly in the history of mankind and of each person? Among the many that come to mind, one stands out: supernatural optimism, fruit of the theological virtue of hope. Leaning on God, trusting in his omnipotence and mercy, we possess the certainty that there is no difficulty (within or without, however great it might appear) that we cannot overcome. It is God himself who is determined to make us saints and to fill our apostolate with fruit! "The activity of the Holy Spirit," writes one Father of the Church, "is directed totally towards the good of souls and salvation. . . . He comes to the soul with the dispositions of a true teacher, because He comes to save, to cure, to teach, to admonish, to strengthen, to console, to enlighten. He produces

these effects, above all, in the soul of the one who receives him; then, through that person, also in the souls of others."²⁰

Christian hope moves us, on the one hand, never to lose sight of the final goal of our earthly pilgrimage, the possession of God in heaven; and, on the other, to find peace in our struggle, determination amid difficulties, victory over temptations, even though sometimes we fall through human weakness, and we have to get up again. But as a sign of that supernatural certainty, we bear in our souls the indelible mark of the Holy Spirit received in the sacrament of Confirmation: the character, the "*imprint*" of God, which declares: *this is my beloved son, one who will struggle for me and for himself to obtain glory.*²¹

The path we have to follow is marked out very clearly. It is the path Christ walked during his earthly life, and the Church keeps it intact through her sacraments and teaching, which speak to us about lovingly fulfilling the Will of the Father. We are called to travel the path opened by the Son of God made man, in order to thus share in his joyful journey towards the Father, even in real moments of suffering. "The eternity that enters into us is a sovereign power of love that seeks to guide our whole life towards its ultimate purpose, hidden in the mystery of the Father. Jesus himself indissolubly linked the two movements, descent and the ascent, which define the Incarnation: 'I came

18. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *Get-together*, December 8, 1971.

19. John Paul II, prayer for the second year of preparation for the Jubilee in the year 2000.

20. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* XVI, 16.

21. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *Get-together*, November 19, 1972.

from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father' (Jn 16:28).

"Eternity has entered human life. Now human life is called to make the journey with Christ from time to eternity."²²

The Blessed Virgin is another reason for our supernatural hope. Mary is the especially beloved Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Tabernacle of the Holy Spirit... and our Mother. Under her protection, we are secure, always in the shadow of the Paraclete. Like our Father, let us ask the one who is *Spes nostra*, our Hope, *to kindle in us a holy desire that we may all come together to dwell in the house of the Father. Nothing need disturb us if we make up our minds to anchor our hearts in a real longing for our true fatherland. Our*

*Lord will lead us there with his grace, and he will send a good wind to carry our ship to the bright shores of our destination:*²³ the breath of the Holy Spirit, to whom we sincerely want to be docile each and every day of this year 1998, and throughout all our life.

Pray for your brothers who will be ordained as deacons in a few weeks, on January 24. Keep praying for the Pope, for the Church, for the expansion of the Work to new countries and places, for those who suffer in body or in spirit: for all my intentions. I ask the Paraclete to make you more "stubborn," more men and women of faith.

Your father blesses you with all his heart.

✠ Javier

Rome, January 1, 1998

22. John Paul II, General Audience, December 10, 1997.

23. *Friends of God*, no. 221.