

The University and Unity of Life: Blessed Josemaria Escriva's Vision

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The University in a Time of Change

In considering the current state and the future of the university, a name that comes to mind quite naturally is that of Etienne Gilson, who studied in depth the philosophical and theological currents that forged the very origin of the European university. Paraphrasing what the great medievalist said about philosophy, we could say that the university buries its gravediggers and is reborn from its ashes like the phoenix. The discussion of the "crisis of the university" has been, for decades, a frequent focus of discussion about the situation of education and culture in the twentieth century. There have even been proposals to replace the unity of the university with a dispersed "multiversity," or to exchange the buildings and lawns of the university campus for the electronic world of computer networks and data banks. Hardly anyone believes in these technocratic utopias any more. Once again the university has shown itself to be an indispensable social instrument. But this apparent victory does not necessarily give grounds for optimism. The opposite may be the case.

Heidegger used to like to quote Hölderlin's penetrating words: "Wherever the danger exists, that is where salvation appears." When the danger isn't obvious, when one thinks that he is safe, then the need for salvation is also obscured. Where there is no danger neither is there salvation. And this may be the present situation in many universities.

As Robert Spaemann has said, utopias are dead. But what remains when what supposedly had taken the place of religion is shown to have been an illusion? There is either a return to the beginning, a return to the living God, or a radical anti-utopia which denies any transcendental dimension to human thought. Richard Rorty, among other relativistic writers, has sketched out this anti-utopia. It is the dream of a liberal society, where all of the absolute demands of knowledge, religion and ethics have disappeared, and where only pleasure and pain are considered true, tested according to what Amartya Sen

calls a “mental metrics.” Nothing should be taken seriously. We want to feel good, and that’s all that matters. Nietzsche’s heroic nihilism has been replaced by a banal nihilism which, also in the words of Spaeman, calls itself “liberal” and its opponents “fundamentalists.” For this “light” nihilism, freedom means the multiplication of possibilities of choice. But it does not admit of any option for which it is worthwhile renouncing all the others. There is no place for the “treasure hidden in a field,” which impels the finder to sell all that he possesses.

The skeptical relativism of the apparently dominant culture not only implies the spiritual death of the soul, but also of any vital culture. Without this culture, the university itself ends up resembling the funereal description that Ortega y Gasset gave it: “a sad, inert, opaque, practically lifeless thing.” The university that, for eight centuries, has shown itself capable of responding to the challenges arising from without, now appears defenseless against the menace that has arisen within its own walls and that is robbing it of meaning. We are facing the phenomenon sociologists call “implosion,” that is, a dry explosion towards the center, produced by an internal vacuum. This is not merely a functional problem; it represents a decisive institutional crossroads. The university has an excess of organization; what is lacking is life. What it needs is, in the words of Karl Jaspers, “the basic spiritual vigor without which any reform of the university is useless.”

Blessed Josemaria Escriva: a new and radical university vision

Intellectual history reminds us that, in similar periods of darkness, it has often been deep and lucid personalities who have accurately pointed out the direction in which it was necessary to move. Such is the case, in our time, with Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the founder of a number of universities and the inspirer of many other academic initiatives throughout the world. Josemaria Escriva was not only an original thinker and a great academic. He was a holy priest, a man of God. But what is of most interest to our topic is that in him both dimensions, the intellectual and the spiritual, were not separated nor in the least opposed to each other. His own life was an heroic example of what he never ceased to proclaim: an existential unity imbued with refinement and consistency, in which the different anthropological parameters acquired unsuspected depth by being referred to our Father God. This is the source of the intellectual daring that characterized all of his proposals as a university radical who urged forward the search for truth beyond the frontiers of acquired knowledge.

His transcendent vision of earthly realities led him to realize that the spiritual energy the university needs today cannot be reduced to a vague humanism. This is how he expressed it in an academic discourse given on May 9, 1974: “The university knows that the required scientific objectivity justly rejects all ideological

neutrality, all ambiguity, all conformism, all cowardice. The love for truth commits the scientist's entire life and work and sustains the courage of his honesty in the face of possibly uncomfortable situations, since this committed integrity is not always looked upon favorably by public opinion."¹ So-called neutrality is becoming a complete fiction, because it ends up leading to intolerance and sectarianism. Blessed Josemaria added on that same occasion: "This world of ours will be saved, let me remind you, not by those who try to deaden awareness of the life of the spirit, reducing everything to a matter of economics or material well-being, but by those who have faith in God and in the eternal destiny of man, and who know how to receive the truth of Christ as a light providing direction for action and conduct. Because the God of our faith is not a far-off being, who contemplates the fate of men and women with indifference. He is a Father who loves his children ardently, a creating God who overflows with affection for his creatures. And he gives man the great privilege of being able to love, thus transcending what is ephemeral and transitory."²

The paradigm of unity of life

Blessed Josemaria Escrivá's words point to the deep source of the unity and universality of the community of research and learning that is still called the *Universitas Studiorum*, the *Universitas Magistrorum et Alumnorum*. For many academics, a meeting with the founder of Opus Dei resulted in their abandoning a lackadaisical and bourgeois spirit, and committing themselves to the search for truth, a love for freedom and the defense of justice, which transformed their academic vocation. He was a holy and wise man who helped them to understand that the ultimate mission of the university is to foster the freedom of God's children. Divine filiation is the secret that frees us from vanity and dispersion. God's fatherly love opens up the only real possibility that human beings truly come to love one another, and thus bring about a renewal of culture. "The bond of the Gospel with man," said John Paul II, at the Complutense University of Madrid, "is creative of culture at its very foundation, since it teaches us to love each person's humanity and singular dignity . . . The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a requirement of culture but also of faith. . . . A faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully accepted, nor fully thought through, nor faithfully lived."³

Faith becomes culture because it teaches one to love man in his concrete humanity, in that vital unity made up of matter and spirit, intimacy and transcendence, unrepeatable singularity and an openness to the universal. It is not a con-

1. Blessed Josemaria Escrivá, "El compromiso de la verdad," in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, Eunsá, Pamplona 1993, pp. 106-107. From here on this work will be cited by title, followed by the page number.

2. *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, p. 109.

3. John Paul II, *Address to academic and research representatives of the university*, November 3, 1982, no. 2, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, V, 3, 1982, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983.

tingent historic fact that the university is Christian in its very origin. In fact the very idea of a university becomes dimmed and weakened when one forgets its Christian roots.

Already in the first third of the twentieth century, Max Weber gave us advanced warning of this lost unity. Once faith in the true God is dissipated, what remains is a “polytheism of values.” Modern man finds himself internally torn by a multiplicity of incompatible loyalties that coincide only in excluding the indivisible faithfulness to the *unicum necessarium*. Each of us can experience in his own flesh these “personal experiences of discontinuity,” which cause one to change one’s costume several times each day. The word “person” has once again regained its etymological meaning of “a mask.” It is often the case that various persons co-exist in a single subject, without it being easy to identify oneself with any single one of them. Are we members of a family, professionals, citizens, believers or simply clowns? All and none of these. Max Weber announced that the disenchantment of the world by science, its savage modernization, would necessarily lead to men who would be “specialists without a soul, workers without a heart.” Now they are everywhere. As is that “lack of meaning” which, according to the German sociologist, would be the price that must be paid for the replacement of convictions by conventions.

A new complexity has arisen that is more than a mere increase in the complications which have always accompanied human life. There is still truth in what T.S. Eliot said, “The human race cannot bear very much reality.” But what is happening now is that the new complexity stems not from an excess of reality but from a vacuum of being. The proliferation of personal isolation and alienation and the undesirable affects that the state of perplexity is provoking in us, has its cause in the separation between political and economic structures on the one hand and the real, daily life of individuals on the other. What sociologists call “technostructure” or “technosystem”—the interlacing of the market, the state and the communications media—presents today an “unreal” picture, in Newman’s sense of the term: the man in the street is unable to recognize himself in these powerful and spectral figures.

Today’s university cannot take refuge in a bucolic simplicity that possibly never existed and that now is simply impossible to attain. The university, if it still wants to continue being such, finds itself today faced with the challenge of understanding this new complexity and converting it into a human reality.

The rediscovery of everyday life

It is urgent to rediscover a source of forgotten meaning, anterior to all of our constructions and interpretations. This primary source of meaning is found in everyday life, in the ordinary activity where Blessed Josemaria Escriva situates the

normal field of sanctification of the Christian who carries out his work in the midst of the world. The original source of meaning, submerged beneath the dense cloaks of chaotic complexity, is nothing other than the unity of human life: the unity of each person in his concrete humanity, whose social nature demands an integration into understandable communities, on a human scale, among which first place is held by the family and the school.

The solution that the university can provide to a disoriented society is not primarily recourse to the abstraction usually referred to as "a change of structures." The true solution is found right there in the street, in the immediate reality of the lives of men and women, in their ways of living and working, and even more radically, in the directing of the great variety of human affairs to the single goal of the living God who is always close to us. In a homily given outdoors on the campus of the University of Navarre, Josemaria Escriva reminded students, professors and administrative employees that "we cannot lead a double life. We cannot be like schizophrenics if we want to be Christians. There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things. There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ."⁴

The philosophy of creation and the theology of grace combine without confusion to confer on the idea of the university a tremendous transforming energy at this beginning of a new millennium. Dispersion is overcome when we remember that the Holy Spirit is, as St. Thomas Aquinas said, "the primordial gift." More intimate to me than I am to myself, the light of uncreated Wisdom illuminates all created realities, leading us deeper into the being of things. Because, as Blessed Josemaria Escriva said, "There is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it."⁵

The university becomes a passionate adventure of the spirit when it is seen as a vital community in which professors and students come together freely in an effort to "detect the flashes of divine splendor which shine through the commonest everyday realities."⁶

4. Blessed Josemaria Escriva, "Passionately Loving the World," in *Conversations*, Scepter, Princeton, 1993, no. 114. From here on this work will be cited by title, followed by the page number.

5. *Conversations*, no. 114.

6. *Conversations*, no. 119.

Sanctification of university work

"Wherever the danger exists, that is where salvation appears." Human work, which was the focus of the collectivist utopias and which now is the source of the individualistic anti-utopias, is ennobled when it is converted into a means for completing the work of creation, for the service of all mankind, especially the most needy, and for seeking one's own perfection, personal sanctity in the midst of the world. This is a task that is transcendent and immanent at the same time, which breaks, both from within and from above, the closed circle of that negative dialectic which has led modern ideologies to the point of death. This is also how a new *culture of life* can be sketched out, which boldly opposes the old *culture of death*, to use the fertile expressions of Pope John Paul II.

Irreconcilable division is the seed of death. The harmonious unity of a plurality is the root of life. And the essence of a University is based on the conviction that such an organic unity is possible, that there is a necessary juncture between truth and unity which can be unveiled by the highest human capacity, by the calm contemplation of reality. On the other hand, the opposition between spirit and matter, between truth and efficacy, between humanistic education and professional training, is the unstaunched wound through which the university ideal bleeds to death.

We are seeing the failure of the academic programs of the enlightenment, which tried to join fields of knowledge on the basis of a cold objectivity that was supposedly neutral, setting aside any love of truth. The opposition between love and knowledge, as if they were respectively the irrational and the rational, is a dialectical distortion which ends up by reducing love to physical desire and knowledge to the trivial curiosity that is hidden beneath the hopeless optimism of purposeless erudition. In reality, however, love is the source of all knowledge and the innermost energy which nourishes a community of research and teaching.

The formation of young peoples' personalities

One can't, strictly speaking, talk about a university where research and teaching is not based on a passionate love for the world and for our fellow men and women, in whose countenance shines the splendor of subsistent Love. As Blessed Josemaría Escrivá pointed out, "There is no university properly speaking if the transmission of knowledge is not joined to the complete formation of the personalities of young people. The humanism of the early Greeks was conscious of the importance of this. But when, in the plenitude of time, Christ revealed for all times the hidden mysteries of our eternal destiny, an order was established that was both human and divine, in the service of which the university attains its highest role."⁷

7. "Formación enteriza de las personalidades jóvenes," in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, p. 77.

The foundation of this integral formation is a solid intellectual preparation, described in a text written years ago by the founder of the University of Navarre:

"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."⁸

Of course, the university should not limit its concerns to an exclusively academic sphere. This would make it lose its contact with life; its knowledge would turn in on itself, becoming narcissistic, and would eventually shrivel up. Blessed Josemaría opened unsuspected perspectives for many in his conception of higher studies. "The university," he energetically affirmed, "does not live with its back turned to any uncertainty, to any concern, to any of mankind's need. But in studying these problems with scientific depth, it must also move hearts, fight passivity, awaken sleeping forces, and form citizens desirous of constructing a more just society. In this way it will contribute with its universal work to the lowering of barriers which prevent mutual understanding among men, to the alleviating of fear of an uncertain future, to the fostering, by its love for truth, justice and freedom, of true peace and concord among peoples and nations."⁹

The main role of the university in history

The great social and cultural upheavals that we have been going through at the end of the 20th century have once more given a surprising topicality to these principles of the university spirit. As in other crucial moments of its now long history, the university needs to rediscover in our time the decisive role it must carry out in the guiding of such deep changes. The lesson of history tells us that allowing itself to be carried along by the current of external events always amounts to the decline of the university. In contrast, the university flourishes only when it succeeds in being "at the very source of changes," to use an expression of Josemaría Escrivá.

8. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *Furrow*, Scepter, Princeton, 1988, no. 428.

9. "La Universidad ante cualquier necesidad de los hombres." Academic discourse, October 7, 1972, in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, p. 98.

The change now taking place might be characterized as the transformation of the industrial society into the knowledge society. The collapse of the materialistic interpretation of history is apparent not only in the events in Eastern Europe. It is also seen in the “silent revolution” transforming our way of working and thinking. We know now that the true riches of peoples are not based primarily on their capacity to produce and process raw materials. Our chief resource now consists in the ability to generate new knowledge, and in our agility and versatility in processing and transmitting information.

It seems clear that, in this situation, the demands on the university will be both pressing and difficult to respond to. To measure up to such historic circumstances, to be capable of taking steps to meet the changes with originality and effectiveness, the mentality of university people themselves has to undergo a deep renewal. But the most interesting part of this challenge is based primarily on the fact that the progress that is being asked of us is—in the sense of the Aristotelian *praxis teleia*—an advance towards ourselves, a new encounter with the genuine tradition of the *Universitas Studiorum*. The new cultural sensitivity as well as the impressive unfolding of science and technology in recent decades, has broken the watertight compartments of the conventional disciplines and is crying out for a new articulation of knowledge that can once more ground the plurality of sciences in the unity of what is most truly human. It is in this context that the paradigm of unity of life proposed by Blessed Josemaria Escriva presents an extraordinary fruitfulness.

An Interdisciplinary Dialogue

From this perspective, an interdisciplinary dialogue becomes today an unavoidable demand, because the real problems for which the university should be seeking solutions always include a variety of scientific aspects that cannot be fitted into the web of a rigidly organized system. As the Chancellor of the University of Navarre said recently, “each discipline contributes in its own way to the perfection of persons and society. This common aspiration leads to a situation where all fields of knowledge can and must become related and interchange their contributions, without in this way losing their own special character and without diluting their own presuppositions and methods. The University of Navarre wants its students, in addition to obtaining a professional training that will allow them to perform a competent service to society, to benefit from the interdisciplinary dialogue, so that, within human limitations, they can attain their own vital synthesis. And our goal is that, saturated with a university and Christian spirit, they attain an authentic ideal of human excellence and are able to follow appropriate examples to live with uprightness and a spirit of service.”¹⁰

10. Javier Echevarría: *El servicio a la verdad y la verdad como servicio*. Academic address, January 31, 1998. Cf. Ponz, Francisco: “La Universidad al servicio de la persona,” in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, pp. 197-223.

Universities have to open themselves to this dynamic of inter-departmental cooperation. Besides generosity and a big vision, the new situation requires some operative procedures that the university can find in the sciences that study human activity.

But, as was previously pointed out, the change in organizational model would be superficial and ineffective if it was not based on a change in the epistemological and ethical model. As Alasdair MacIntyre has noted, it is a matter of moving from the paradigm of certainty to the paradigm of truth.

Truth and certainty

According to the model of certainty, there is no depth to reality, there is no mystery in the being of things; there are only problems that lend themselves to being resolved with the proper methodology. The objective structures are there, at the disposal of anyone who is persistent enough and uses an adequate methodology. A method, such as the Cartesian one, opens up to us these objective structures: a world that is made accessible regardless of the ethical dispositions of the person, the community of which we form part, or the period of history we are living in. This outlook has led to a dead end, to a series of widespread fictions in scientific and ethical language, to a profound demoralization in broad sectors of society. It is now time to move from the paradigm of certainty to the paradigm of truth.

In accordance with the paradigm of truth, theoretical knowledge and practice has a great deal of "work" in it, almost craftsmanship: this is the classic meaning of the word "savant." In order to learn it is necessary to become part of a community of learning, which has a dynamic of tradition and progress, which establishes norms to which its members freely link themselves, which encourages intellectual and ethical virtues, without which any advance in knowledge is superficial and illusory. Access to truth requires an exacting preparation, shared values and self-discipline; the same as does the proper exercise of freedom, to which it is closely linked.

The strict pretension of certainty is oriented towards the past, to putting two and two together with a security that guarantees the supremacy of reason. Therefore objectivism is obsessed with justification and providing proofs, to such an extent that it always ends up trying in vain to articulate all the scaffolding of a *foundational* concept, in which questions of the "point of departure" and the model of inference constitute the central and indeed irresolvable problem.

In contrast, the paradigm of truth is primarily concerned not with mooring its point of departure to a solid support, but with attaining the end of one's research, which is precisely the truth, understood as a good of the intellect.

Hence the beginning of its research is tentative and apparently shaky: it uses *dialectics* in the Aristotelian sense, looking at the most common opinions about the problem it is trying to elucidate. It progresses by eliminating from consideration the positions that presuppose others, until it reaches a principle which does not imply any other and which itself is implied in various ways by all of the others. It does not consider this principle as a definitive truth, but continually re-examines it, to test its solidity and especially its fruitfulness as a truth. In this way the search for truth meets the fullness of reality, without trying to completely assure the beginning and each of the following steps. One who seeks the truth is not looking for exhaustive knowledge of what he is investigating. On the contrary, he tries to make what is already known vulnerable, for he always aspires to know more and better, while rejoicing in the possible upsetting of his theories, since this implies an advance towards the attainment of truth. And paradoxically, it is this openness towards risk that in a certain sense makes the person of the seeker invulnerable, since what is in play is not his own interests but his openness to reality.

In contraposing truth to certainty—the “spirit of excellence” to the “spirit of geometry,” according to Pascal’s distinction—it is not necessary to get into the problematic distinction of the *two cultures*. Of course, it is not that one of the models represents the humanities and the other the experimental sciences. Obviously the paradigm of truth puts into relief aspects of research which for a long time have been hidden or forgotten: that all research is a human activity; that it is necessary to carry it out within the bosom of a community of learning and teaching such as, among others, is the university; that it possesses evident moral aspects and that it does not stand olympically aloof from historical and social conditioning. But this does not mean that the values proper to the model of certainty are eliminated, such as rigor in the obtaining of data, terminological precision or logical validity of argumentation.

Freely loving the truth is the essence of university life. As Pope John Paul II pointed out recently, “the vocation of every university is service to the truth: to discover it and transmit it to others.” And this enables the university, “through the research effort of many scientific disciplines, to gradually approach the supreme Truth. Man transcends the confines of the various disciplines of knowledge to the point of directing them towards that Truth and towards the definitive realization of humanity itself. Here one can speak of the solidarity of the various scientific disciplines at the service of man, called to discover the truth, ever more fully, about himself and about the world around him.”¹¹

11. John Paul II, *Address* on the occasion of the Sixth Centenary of the Jagellonian University of Krakow, June 8, 1997, no. 4.

The role of community in university formation

As Jesus Arellano says, the university gathers up the vital forces that first appear in youth; it tempers them in practical and theoretical habits, and launches them into the directive tasks of social life. Quality teaching is much more than transferring preprocessed knowledge; it is much more than the transmission of information. A quality university education requires the ethical and scientific forging of mature and free personalities, which grow together with their professors and fellow students in a fruitful environment, in a climate of refined companionship, of civic responsibility and promotion of social justice. A good higher education is made up of an apprenticeship in objective content, but also of an incorporation into innovative methodologies, of the acquisition of a way of relating to others and an increase in creative capacity.

"Here, in this living together, personality takes shape," said the founder of the University of Navarre.¹² And his faithful successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, put this fundamental educational thesis into the context of the end of the millennium: "By a singular providence of God, in these last years of the 20th century we have seen the collapse of a great number of the totalitarian regimes which were created by theoretical materialism, and of the ideological currents that served to justify these inhuman systems. But as Pope John Paul II has pointed out time and again, at the origin of those unhappy social and human problems which afflict Europe and the world at the present time, one finds a selfish individualism that stems from practical materialism, ignoring the true dignity of the human person. When one forgets that man is a being with a transcendent destiny and open to the community of his fellow men and women, solidarity loses its foundation and social life becomes subject to a process of degradation with consequences that affect not only the life of nations, but also the international order." But overcoming any temptation to pessimism, he goes on to say: "In the face of this historic challenge, the university must not surrender comfortably to the dominant forces; rather it must draw from its own intellectual and ethical resources the necessary energy to find solutions for such acute problems."¹³

The Christian identity of the university

According to Blessed Josemaría, the three institutional goals of the university are: to elaborate a synthesis of knowledge, to harmoniously form its students, and to serve the social environment around it. Now at the turn of the century, such goals take on a renewed importance. Today it is possible for Christian wisdom and a humanism with classical roots to join hands with the

12. *Conversations*, no. 84.

13. Alvaro del Portillo: *Entusiasmar a un mundo cansado*. Academic discourse, Pamplona, January 29, 1994. In: "Romana" 18 (1994) 91-92.

most advanced scientific findings and cutting edge technology. Professionals are needed who are efficient precisely because they have a unitary and global vision of reality, because they are people of culture. Serving society does not mean giving in to pragmatism; rather it requires a daring anticipation of a more just future.

The fruitfulness of the academic task acquires transcendent perspective when, in a climate of friendship and dialogue, it is inspired by the Christian values present in the original idea of the university. Faith is an illumination and a spur, never a restriction or barrier. Christianity is life that has been freed by Christ, an existence redeemed from vanity and dispersion. As Professor Elisabeth Anscombe said on one occasion, the decisive thing about a university is whether it is known there that God is the Truth.

The university vision of Blessed Josemaria Escriva

Blessed Josemaria's response to this complex situation is surprising in its immediacy and simplicity. It elegantly evades intellectualized disquisitions. He liked to "hammer nails in by the point."¹⁴ He went straight ahead, with the simplicity and certainty of someone who sees the goal, going to the very heart of the question. And he proposed a solution that is surprising in its freshness and relevance, in its powerful vigor, in the richness of its levels and shades.

When the founder of Opus Dei received the extraordinary grace with which God made him see his divine will,¹⁵ his faithfulness to that grace and his intellectual clarity led him to discover intuitively, in a sure and penetrating way, that the solution to the social situation lay in everyday life, with its multiplicity of small realities, and above all in their unity in our Father God. Thus it is that his spirit and teaching contain an answer to the problems of our age, and, at the same time, a message that is valid for all times.

As he said one October morning, in that discourse given at the University of Navarre which is known among students and professors as "the campus homily": "I assure you, my sons and daughters, that when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you repeatedly, and hammered away once and again on the idea, that the Christian vocation consists of making heroic verse out of the prose of each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives."¹⁶

14. Cf. *The Way*, no. 845.

15. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Const. *Ut sit*, Preface, November 28, 1982; Homily at the Mass of for the beatification of Josemaria Escriva, Rome, May 17, 1992.

16. *Conversations*, no. 116.

The founder and first Chancellor of the University of Navarre taught these essential truths both with his words and, above all, with his heroic life. In his university addresses, in homilies and in unforgettable get-togethers, he showed how efficiency can be reconciled with mercy and understanding, freedom with dedication, good humor with seriousness, concern for the great problems of life with care for the smallest details. And he did this as "God's juggler," without scholarly pretensions, opening up the way with his faith, with a joy and affection that broke down all barriers. In the congenial figure of this holy priest, there appeared a wise man, a great university figure capable of galvanizing enthusiasm in research and teaching around values that are perennial and unmistakably up to date.