

Addresses

Pamplona January 16, 2003

*Address to the plenary session
of the regional government of
Navarre at the ceremony
honoring the 50th anniversary
of the University of Navarre.*

Your excellency, President of the Government of Navarre, esteemed dignitaries and rector, dear professors and students, ladies and gentlemen:

I want to begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to greet all those present and to thank you for your warm welcome.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Navarre, in the person of the President of the government, for the careful attention the University of Navarre has always received from this Ancient Kingdom.

The joyful reality we contemplate today was made possible by the constant prayer and sacrifice of the Founder and First Grand Chancellor, St. Josemaría Escrivá, and by his close vigilance as the university began to grow. He said in 1967: "The University of Navarre was begun in 1952—after many years of prayer, I'm glad to say—with the dream of engendering a university

embodying the cultural and apostolic ideals of a group of professors with a great love for teaching."¹

This university was born in Navarre, and therefore it was with a universal outlook, open to all men and women. The passion with which this people has always defended its freedom over the centuries drew the attention of a great lover of freedom, St. Josemaría Escrivá, Aragonese by birth, Navarran by adoption. This land provided fertile ground for the first steps of an endeavor open to all, which bears witness to the fact that "a university can spring from the energies of the people and be sustained by the people."²

Navarre occupied a special place in the heart of St. Josemaría. On December 17, 1937, the bishop of Pamplona at that time, Marcelino Olaechea, who was a good friend of his, welcomed Fr. Josemaría, then a young thirty-five year old priest, after he had just crossed over the Spanish border. During those days he was already noting down some personal considerations which would later form part of his most universal book, *The Way*. It is almost certain that several of those points were written here in Pamplona. A new and longer stay took place in June 1941, when he directed four seven-day retreats for diocesan priests, one after another, in Burlada.

1. St. Josemaría Escrivá, "La universidad al servicio de la sociedad actual" (1967), in *Josemaría Escrivá y la universidad*, 145.

2. St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, 120.

Personally I retain vivid memories of other visits by St. Josemaría to this city. On October 25, 1960, after the Mass of the Holy Spirit celebrated in the cathedral by Archbishop Enrique Delgado of Pamplona, the “General Studies of Navarre” was formally established in a solemn academic act. In the afternoon, in the City Hall, this august assembly bestowed on St. Josemaría the title of adopted son of Pamplona.

I also warmly recall November 21, 1965, when the Holy Father Paul VI, in Rome, blessed the statue of Holy Mary, Mother of Fair Love, which now presides over the university campus.

A few years later, on the sunlit morning of October 8, 1967, St. Josemaría gave a homily during Holy Mass before more than forty thousand friends of the university. In his homily, he summed up the spiritual message that God had imprinted on his soul on October 2, 1928: the invitation to find Christ in the midst of our daily work. “There is no other way, my children. Either we find God in our ordinary life or we will never find him.”³

On another splendid morning recently in October, in Rome, his Holiness John Paul II canonized the person who incarnated the message of holiness in everyday life—the message he proclaimed, with special attractiveness, during that Mass on the esplanade of the University of Navarre’s library.

There also come to my mind and heart countless memories of the second Grand Chancellor of the University, his Excellency Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. With the magnanimity proper to a man of gigantic faith and generous availability, he encouraged so many initiatives at the University of Navarre that marvelously intertwined university tradition with scientific progress.

These events lead us to give heartfelt thanks to God for so many blessings, and to continue working with more determination in this beloved university, which has the responsibility to be “a world-class cultural hub,”⁴ as her holy Founder wanted. Much has been achieved during these first fifty years, both in teaching and in research. The University of Navarre began in 1952 with forty-eight students and eight professors. Today, there are more than fifty thousand graduates, twelve thousand students and three thousand professors and other personnel. It has made important contributions in both the sciences and humanities, and I am very happy when I consider the service that the university has rendered to this land of Navarre, by creating thousands of new jobs here.

These figures highlight the efforts of thousands of people who, inspired by St. Josemaría and following the lead of the first rector, Professor Ishmael Sánchez Bella, have dedicated their lives to this marvelous cultural undertaking, which has always aspired

3. St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, 114.

4. St. Josemaría Escrivá, “La universidad, foco cultural de primer orden” (1960), in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, 70.

to work shoulder to shoulder with other universities.

However, given the high standard set by the Founder and first Grand Chancellor, we are convinced that there is still a great deal left to do. Today's society so clearly stands in need of our disinterested service. Before us lie new challenges that require a response in keeping with a Christian spirit and human dignity. We face the challenge of respecting the norms of bioethics in scientific research. Confronting us are the need to strengthen the family, the problems stemming from globalization, the challenges of migration, international justice, world terrorism, poverty in third-world countries, the protection of the environment, the consolidation of a new Europe faithful to its Christian roots. These are some of the current issues for fruitful dialogue among the disciplines, in striving to foster a Christian culture.

The University of Navarre wants to take a qualitative leap forward in the years to come in research and in the formation of women and men disposed to serve and to build up a more just society. They need to be "experts in humanity," as the Pope has recently reminded us, sowers of peace and joy, as St. Josemaría said, who put art and science at the service of man, firmly committed to the truth. They need to shun the neutrality that ordinarily serves as a justification for selfish individualism and anthropological reductionism; they must be people who are persistent and mag-

nanimous, capable of bringing the good name of Navarre to the entire world.

I ask God, through St. Josemaría's intercession, to continue pouring forth his graces on the University of Navarre and on these blessed lands for which the first Grand Chancellor prayed so much and for which he felt a special affection.⁵ Thank you.

Pamplona January 17, 2003

*At the ceremony for awarding
three honorary doctorates at the
University of Navarre*

Most eminent Cardinal and esteemed civil authorities, illustrious professors of this university, ladies and gentlemen:

In this academic year 2002-2003, the University of Navarre will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its existence in this world. In the years before its founding, it existed only in the priestly soul of St. Josemaría Escrivá, who prepared this beautiful reality with his prayer and sacrifice. Certainly for a university institution destined to serve humanity throughout the centuries, five decades are not much time. But if looked at from the perspective of man's allotted stay on this earth, it constitutes a period of time worthy of being celebrated.

5. St. Josemaría Escrivá, "La universidad, foco cultural de primer orden" (1960), in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, 70.