

the family institutes. As I noted above, the autonomy that characterizes these organisms, the freedom and responsibility of their respective directors, leaves room for a free evaluation and discussion of methods, instruments, times and strategies. In any case, it seems to me that there is one conclusion about which it is impossible not to be in agreement, and

which I therefore want to strongly emphasize. I refer to the decisive role of education. Political battles, informative efforts, cultural commitment are all important for the future of the family. But I think that the field in which the future of the family is particularly at stake is education. To truly defend the family, we must, above all, educate it.

Addresses

Rome October 9, 2000

*At the opening ceremony for the
Academic year 2000-2001 at
the Pontifical University of the
Holy Cross*

We are preparing to begin a new academic year, undertaking once again the adventure whose aim is not only the search for truth, but also the effort to improve oneself and the world around us. For a university person who loves his work, whether professor or student, this is never something repetitious. The work of studying and teaching always includes the discovery that one can give new meaning to the realities one encounters. Above all, work is never repetitious when it is the place and opportunity for a daily encounter with God, who has called us to follow him precisely along this path.

A month ago, in an address to participants in the “Jubilee of university teachers,” the Holy Father warned those present “not to give in to the relativistic environment that threatens a great part of today’s culture” (no. 3). We who live in the same cultural milieu as our contemporaries, who share their triumphs and failures, who passionately love this world of ours, are not immune to the environment the Holy Father warns us about. But it would be an error to find in this reality motives for discouragement or anxiety. On the contrary, we have to interpret it as a call to a loving and constructive vigilance, because we know that the decisive power in this combat is not ours, but God’s. And we know that God relies on our response. The many invitations by the Master to be vigilant,¹ and also those of St. Peter,² are the exact opposite of a strategy of closing in on oneself, or an attempt to create a world made to one’s own measure. One who is vigilant keeps his intellectual faculties

1. Cf. Mt 24:42; 25:13; 26:38-41; Mk 13:33-37; 14:24-38.

2. Cf. 1 Pet 5:8.

attentive to the realities that surround him and tries to understand them. The fact that we share the same atmosphere, and therefore also to a certain extent the same germs that we necessarily breathe in the course of the day, can be converted into an occasion for dialogue, helping us to understand others, their points of view, their difficulties, the reasons that have led them to arrive at conclusions so different from our own. But this dialogue should always be based on the joy and security of our faith in Christ.

The university was born historically as a place of dialogue. This idea should be connatural to us. Nevertheless, there is a widespread view of dialogue as a readiness to dispense with the truth, whereas in reality any dialogue that begins by renouncing the possibility of reaching port is not even methodologically sustainable. Only a person open to the truth will accept the possibility of being mistaken. Even when the dialogue concerns questions in which we do not have authority to concede anything, as is the case with the truths of faith, the dialogue has to be based on an obvious premise of clarity and loyalty: our role is only to administer that deposit, although expending the effort needed to understand and formulate its contents better.

The recent declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, is itself new evidence of the fact that clarity is an essential element of all communication and of all true dialogue, both as a methodological requisite and as a hu-

man corrective. An act such as that contained in this *Declaration* expresses fidelity not only to Catholic doctrine, but also to that of non-Catholics. This example should also illumine your activity of study, teaching and research.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that we find ourselves in the presence of a living reality, and this life, in the economy of grace, possesses a dynamism of its own. Whoever tries to live the life of Christ will find Christ in others as well, and will acquire a clear experience of distance and of community, of what unites and what separates in daily life. And in Christ's charity he will find the resources to exercise all the virtues. Blessed Josemaria wrote: "Love and practice charity without setting any limits or discriminating between people, for it is the virtue which marks us out as disciples of the Master. Nevertheless, this charity cannot lead you to dampen your faith—for it would then cease to be a virtue. Nor should it blur the clear outlines that define the faith, nor soften it to the point of changing it, as some people try to do, into something amorphous and lacking the strength and power of God."³

The challenge of evangelization thus takes on personal terms for each one of us, and becomes the fascinating challenge of striving for unity of life. Study which is not accompanied by a daily search for union with God in the sacraments and in prayer, work which does not seek to be transformed into contemplation, is more likely to find difficulties in harmoniz-

3. Blessed Josemaria Escriva, *The Forge*, no. 456.

ing Christ's mandate to evangelize all nations with the equally clear demand to respect others. One should not be surprised that even the concept of conversion might seem problematical when one has not personally made the effort to convert, with the lights and struggles that this entails. "We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day," as the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* stresses (no. 47).

The Holy Spirit will give us the light and grace to find in our work

during the upcoming academic year the place for the conversion which each of us, before God, knows that he has to undertake. Undoubtedly one's own work constitutes the scene for the continual conversion of heart that the Paraclete himself wishes to carry out in us.

With these hopes and invoking for all of us, professors, students and administrative personnel, the intercession of holy Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, it is a joy for me to declare the academic year 2000-2001 inaugurated.

Articles and Interviews

Lisbon, Portugal July, 2000

Interview published in the magazine "Christus"

In your daily contact with Blessed Josemaria, how did his holiness make itself seen?

Blessed Josemaria's union with God, which he lived in a natural way, could be seen in a thousand details. It was shown, for example, in his devout genuflections before our Lord in the Tabernacle. One could also see it in his smile, in his orderly work, in his constant concern for others, in his kindly look, even when he was tired.

To live with a saint is a privilege, an education, and also a constant

cause of joy, because, by his generous struggle to exercise all the Christian virtues, he creates around him an atmosphere of cheerfulness, of prayer, of serenity.

What characteristics distinguished him from other people? What is his legacy to contemporary society?

The saints always have something about them that is genuine and human, and at the same time supernatural, which attracts people. They don't spend their lives adapting to the world around them but in striving to bring the world to God, and thus they seek to identify themselves with Jesus Christ. In this sense one can say that they are profoundly free, unclassifiable. The saints have also often been a "sign of contradiction" to those who refuse to accept radical truths.