

December 24, the Holy Father will solemnly open the Jubilee Holy Year. Let us prepare ourselves with effective resolutions of conversion, seeking God's forgiveness and forgiving anyone who has offended us. Let us prepare ourselves by rejecting sin, which breaks the bond of charity with God and others. Only then will we savor the joy of being Christians, sons and daughters of God and of Mary. "Charity," the Pope teaches, "has its source in the Father; it is fully revealed in the Passover of the Son, crucified and resurrected; and it is infused in us by the Holy Spirit. Through charity, God makes us sharers in his own love. A person who truly loves with God's

love also loves his brother as God loves him. This is the root of Christianity's great newness."¹⁶

Let us entrust to the Blessed Virgin, to her delicate, discreet, sure intercession, the steps that we still have to take to prepare ourselves for the Great Jubilee. The best way to honor our Lady is to struggle to imitate her. We have tried to sketch some features of the model that God sets forth for us in her. Let us ask her to help us to follow her example of correspondence to grace, of love for souls, of service to unity. In this way Jesus will once again be born in us and He will give us the peace that the world cannot give.¹⁷ Amen.

Addresses

Rome October 25, 1999

On the occasion of the opening of academic year 1999-2000 of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, in Rome, Italy.

Dear faculty, students and all who work at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Now that the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Europe has ended just two days ago, I am

happy to be able to be with you once more, especially in these last months of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. However, before stopping to consider this event, let me direct a brief look at the year that has just gone by.

I still keep very present in my memory the affection that our Holy Father John Paul II showed us during the audience he granted on the occasion of our University's fifteenth anniversary. When he expressed his affectionate wish to personally greet many of the participants, we responded with extended applause, by which we tried to show both our filial gratitude

16. Pope John Paul II, Address at a general audience, October 20, 1999.

17. Cf. *Jn* 14:27.

and our complete adherence to his person and to his teachings. I want to invite everyone, professors, students and non-teaching personnel, to frequently renew their union with St. Peter's successor, knowing that this is an essential condition for ecclesiality and a fruitful source of inspiration for your work.

Fifteen years is not a long time for a university. Nevertheless, we can be very thankful for the many good results that we have already seen. In the first place, there comes to mind the figure of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo. The reality that we see today is due to his broad vision and magnanimity. I give thanks to our Lord for having given us such a faithful servant of the Church and of souls.

I also call to mind the numerous persons who have been instructed in our classrooms during these years, who are now spread throughout many countries around the world, as well as the growth of the University itself in its intellectual and organizational work. The latter is shown, to only give two examples, in the beginning of new specializations in various fields and the annual celebration of symposia in the different schools.

A consideration of the goals already achieved should stimulate us to cultivate a great eagerness for improvement in professional formation and in university life, because we are taking part in a great enterprise: that of being present in all environments to give reasoned witness to our faith

in Christ. This endeavor will be the fruit of God's grace and the work of all of us, carried out with depth and perseverance. We have very much present those words Blessed Josemaría wrote in *The Way*: "That work—humble, monotonous, small—is prayer expressed in action, which prepares you to receive the grace of that other work—great and broad and deep—of which you dream."¹

We Christians are called to undertake great projects precisely because Christ has wanted them for humanity. During this academic year, we will cross the threshold of the year 2000 of the Christian Era, towards which the Holy Father has been guiding us since the beginning of his pontificate. In the Bull convoking the Great Jubilee, the Pope wrote: "Jesus is the genuine newness which surpasses all human expectations and such he remains for ever, from age to age. The Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation which he has accomplished by his Death and Resurrection are therefore the true criterion for evaluating all that happens in time and every effort to make life more human."² These are the great projects that we nurse in our heart: to bring the newness of the Gospel to all humanity, to bring back to their source, in the Wisdom and Love of God, all mankind's activities and all created realities.

These considerations, which can help guide your work in the University, place upon us a great personal and collective responsibility. They show us

1. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, no. 825.

2. John Paul II, Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium*, Sept. 29, 1998, no. 1.

that we cannot be satisfied with the goals so far attained. We must go much further, pursuing with great effort an intellectual formation that is ever more firmly anchored in Sacred Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. The Holy Father's words encourage us to contemplate temporal realities in the light of the mystery of the Incarnate Word. Therefore, they invite us to explore new paths for understanding the faith, to dialogue with the efforts of the human sciences and modern culture, to interest ourselves in the challenges evangelization must confront in order to take root in the various cultures.³

Within a few weeks the Jubilee Year will begin, a special time of grace and conversion to God's love, of gratitude to the Savior who has become flesh, of a sinful creature's humility before God's greatness. The Jubilee's grace stems from the Incarnation, thanks to which the unchanging fullness of divine Love has entered into time and established itself here forever. Thereby time itself, which had become sterile and empty through sin, has been filled with the salvation of God. Even more, as the Pope has pointed out, it has become in Christ "a dimension of God, who is himself eternal."⁴ Therefore every moment in time can be filled with meaning and grace, because it brings with it the unmerited offering of an encounter with God.

Through the Incarnation of the Word, God not only comes to dwell among us. He gives himself without

holding anything back, to the point of sacrificing the human life assumed by his divine Person. By his redeeming death, God introduced into time a new dimension of love: that of mercy and pardon. These dimensions, present in God's eternity, enter time and fill it. Therefore, drawing on the grace of Christ's redemptive passion, this time of the Jubilee also asks us to become a messenger of God's call to conversion, the opening of the human heart to God's merciful love.

This is why I spoke to you of the gratitude and humility that this Jubilee should arouse in us, two spiritual attitudes that I propose to you this year for your personal lives and for all the activity at the university. A humility open to the light of God and to the voice of others, to listening to advice and to rectification whenever necessary. A gratitude founded on faith, capable of truly appreciating all that God has given us and of bearing fruit each day in optimism and prayer.

This humility and this gratitude characterized the life of the Mother of God, the protagonist, with her Son, of the event whose two thousandth anniversary we are preparing to celebrate. How can we fail to recall her inspired words, faced with the inestimable gift of the Incarnation: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum... quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae?*⁵ Therefore, as we declare the new academic year inaugurated, today more than ever we go trustingly to Mary Most Holy and commend to her in a special way all of the work at the University.

3. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Fides et Ratio*, Sept. 14, 1998, no. 61.

4. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Nov. 10, 1994, no. 10.

5. Lk 1, 46. 48.