but by those who have faith in God and in the eternal destiny of man, and who open themselves to the truth of Christ as a light providing guidance for action and conduct."[8]

This is an invitation to hope. Let us ask divine Wisdom to assist all those in academic life, men and women of culture and science, so that, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, they will allow themselves to be instructed by the divine Teacher and thus be able, without discriminations of any sort, to teach everyone the truth in charity and freedom: "speaking the truth in love" (*Eph* 4:15).

Holy Mary, our Mother. You are invoked by Christians as *Sedes Sapientiae,* Throne of Wisdom, because the Word of God became flesh in your most pure womb. Attain for us an ardent love for Jesus, your Son, so that by fulfilling the command that he entrusted to the Church (cf. Mt 28:20), we may be witnesses and heralds of the Truth that saves. Amen.

Vatican City October 14, 2000

"The family, treasure of the Church, in the spirit of Opus Dei," is the title of this address at the congress celebrated in Rome, during the Jubilee of Families.

The Pope has frequently highlighted the family as a key factor for society's future. For example, in his exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (no. 40), he said: "As experience testifies, whole civilizations and the cohesiveness of peoples depend above all on the human quality of their families." The fulfillment of the Church's apostolic mission in society also depends in good measure on the quality of Christian families. Therefore pastoral attention to families must be given a central place in the Church's evangelizing activity. Thanks be to God, this is happening in many places. One example of this are the family institutes that are the topic of this session and that have already yielded abundant fruit. Conscious of this reality, the faithful and Cooperators of the Opus Dei Prelature, besides collaborating joyfully in family institutes sponsored by dioceses, Catholic universities, etc., have also been instrumental in starting up institutes in a number of countries, which I will speak about in more detail in a moment.

Before doing so, I would like to make an observation which, although obvious, is nevertheless important. I refer to a principle that is at the heart of the Second Vatican Council's teaching on the People of God: the future of the family is in its own hands. Its future depends on those who make it up: spouses, children, relatives... This truth also constitutes a central aspect of the message that God entrusted to Blessed Josemaria Escriva, the Founder of Opus Dei. As he affirmed without ambiguity: "The

8. Blessed Josemaria Escriva, Address at the awarding of honorary doctorates by the University of Navarre, May 9, 1974.

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best and most important way in which lay men and women can participate in the life of the Church, and indeed the way which all other ways presuppose, is by being truly Christians precisely where they are, in the place to which their human vocation has called them" (*Conversations with Msgr. Escriva*, 112).

This is how Blessed Josemaria saw the family. For a Christian, marriage "is a real supernatural calling...Husband and wife are called to sanctify their married life and to sanctify themselves in it. It would be a serious mistake if they were to exclude family life from their spiritual development. The marriage union, the care and education of children, the effort to provide for the needs of the family as well as for its security and development, the relationships with other persons who make up the community, all these are among the ordinary human situations that Christian couples are called upon to sanctify" (*Christ Is Passing By,* no. 23). It is these premises that explain why the formative activities carried out by the Opus Dei Prelature give such great importance to the family, helping its own faithful, and many other people who so desire, to sanctify themselves in marriage and through marriage and the family.

Like every form of Christian life, the search for God in family life contains a deeply apostolic dimension. Each one has to strive to carry this out above all in one's own home, as regards both the material and especially the spiritual well-being of one's family. But these intrinsic family relationships will not attain Christian maturity if they are limited to the domestic circle. Apostolic zeal is diffusive; it seeks to spread out. While following the channels appropriate to each one's circumstances, this zeal tends naturally to open itself out and embrace the entire world, reflecting the yearnings in the Heart of Christ. Urged on by this spirit, some of the faithful of Opus Dei foster initiatives designed specifically to promote family values in society. These include many different types of projects. Those involved are impelled by their own personal and family responsibilities as citizens, as parents and as Christians. They make use of their professional competence in striving to illumine the multiple dimensions of the family with the Church's teaching, without ever trying to act in the Church's name. They channel their efforts through secular structures, which enables them to seek and actively encourage the collaboration of all persons and institutions that truly seek the good of the family. The public, non-religious character of these institutions, besides strongly emphasizing the personal responsibility of their promoters, facilitates the cooperation of many other people who, even if far from the Christian faith, or not fully sharing in Catholic teaching, maintain in these areas an outlook that fully respects human dignity. In any case, the faithful of Opus Dei who promote or participate in these initiatives do so with a full and unreserved acceptance of Catholic teaching. Not only do they not hide the fact that they are inspired by the Church's doctrine, but they try to make its teachings known everywhere.

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One could cite here very positive results in countries all over the world, including those without a Catholic tradition, thanks to family orientation activities for parents, numerous schools started and supported by families, and family books and magazines.

Among the many initiatives undertaken by faithful and Cooperators of Opus Dei in this field, a few are tied to the Prelature as such, including the family institutes that I want to speak about. The Opus Dei Prelature, in conformity with its statutes and reflecting its foundational charism, does not involve itself with any of the human aspects (professional, technical, financial, etc.) of these initiatives, which keep intact their secular nature. Opus Dei has no teaching or strategy of its own in this area, nor in any other sector of human activity. But it does have a well-defined spirit that points to the profound dimensions found in human realities when seen in the light of the Christian faith. This spirit also promotes freedom and legitimate pluralism in whatever is open to opinion among Catholics.

In addition to the personal Christian formation offered to participants, these initiatives connected with the Prelature receive pastoral and doctrinal assistance and the public guarantee of the conformity of their activities with the doctrine of the Church in matters of faith and morals. In the case of family institutes, the pastoral relevance of this canonical connection with the Prelature, a hierarchical institution of the Church, is clear. But this fact does not reduce the personal responsibility and the scope for legitimate autonomy of those involved. They are acting as citizens directly interested in the good of the family, and as active participants in the community.

The most noteworthy family institutes begun by faithful of Opus Dei are connected with the university. These research and teaching institutes have arisen within existing universities, and over time have developed into academic entities with a life of their own. I would like to note, in this respect, that most of these centers are not called simply "Family Institute," but rather "Institute for Studies on the Family" or "Institute for the Study of Marriage and the Family," etc. The academic mentality of those working in these areas is reflected even in the name, thus demonstrating their seriousness in confronting family problems. This rigorous scientific methodology has given these programs prestige in the eyes of the academic world.

The first experience in this field was the "Institute for Studies on the Family" at the University of Navarre in Spain, begun in 1981. With its large number of schools and departments, the University of Navarre offered good prospects for an institute marked by an interdisciplinary approach. There are many different academic disciplines in which one can and should study family problems. At the University of Navarre, these were grouped into three major areas: the biomedical sciences, the social and psychological sciences, and the humanities. All of the disciplines concerned with the family, including ethics and anthropology, civil and

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canon law, philosophy and theology, contribute with their questions and answers, with their data and methodologies, to casting light on the multiple facets of the reality of the family.

However, an interdisciplinary approach does not imply scattered results. Rather it means working in teams and seeking to attain unity. The university community, when it directs its attention to the family, realizes that it is committed to a work with deep ethical implications. It knows that it has a contribution to make to the subject under study, the family. But it is also aware that it has to learn certain lessons from the family, lessons needed to provide an adequate channel for its own research, since the progress of society (which is the aim of university research) always passes through the family.

The activities of the "Institute for Studies on the Family" at the University of Navarre are focused around three goals: research, teaching, and counseling. In each area, the constant point of reference is an awareness of the dignity of the family as the primary cell of society and as the first expression of the natural solidarity of all human beings. Careful attention is also paid to changes in society and circumstances of time and place. Thus a prudent distance is kept from both theoretical abstraction and a simplistic phenomenological or descriptive focus.

The family institute of the University of La Sabana, in Colombia, founded on similar principles and methodology, began its work in 1990. Its academic activities have since extended to other countries of Latin America, including Ecuador and Uruguay. In 1994, at Austral University in Buenos Aires, the Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family was inaugurated. Two years later a family institute was opened at the University of the Andes, in Chile. The strong evangelizing effect of these initiatives, even in their beginnings, is a motive of joy for me and of gratitude to God. Students in these institutes have later become active participants in the pastoral care of families in multiple sectors of society, including the parishes; they have developed courses for parents, guidance programs and publications that spread a Christian view of the family. In this way the university family institutes are having a multiplying effect that is difficult to calculate but extraordinarily fruitful.

All of this can only be explained by recognizing the existence of a clear reality: these family institutes are responding to a widespread social demand. The professional training that they provide finds immediate application in areas that, at times, do not seem to be directly related to family problems. The courses of the Institute for Family Studies at the University of the Andes, for example, counts among its students not only family counselors but also teachers, social service workers, and personnel directors of large and small companies. This shows that the family is coming to be considered, rightly, as a central focus of social relationships that are of great importance in the workplace.

Many significant conclusions can be drawn from the experience of

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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.

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