

considered him an eminent example of holiness, of the unconditional self-giving that he too proposed—along other paths—to those who drew close to his apostolate. And he celebrated Holy Mass in the room of the saint from Loyola.

To present the Church as made up of divided groups would go against communion, and show an outlook lacking in faith. We are all in the barque of Peter to serve, in a unity of hearts and wills, each according to their mission and charism.

7. Pope Francis has written a great deal about the importance of work for the dignity of the human person. One immediately recalls here the theology of work developed by St. Josemaría. Do you think the new Pope knows the writings of the founder of Opus Dei?

I don't have any information about his knowledge of St. Josemaría's writings, but I do know that the Pope has recourse to St. Josemaría's intercession. Some years ago he came to the Prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace, and remained for about 45 minutes praying before his tomb.

In any case, I am happy to see their agreement in the evaluation of human work as a path of sanctity and of social justice. Recently, recalling his youth, Cardinal Bergoglio said that working in a laboratory had been one of the

most important experiences in his life. "In the laboratory I learned that every human task has possibilities both for good and for bad," he explained. And it's true that, in our daily occupations, we can cultivate the best of ourselves or become egotists. Work is the arena for growing in virtues, or (in words of St. Josemaría) the hinge of our sanctification. The present Roman Pontiff said in 2007: work "guarantees human dignity and freedom, and therefore is the key to every social question." I am sure that the Holy Father will teach us by his example to transform our work—whether intellectual, manual, or domestic—into service, doing it for God and for our fellow men and women.

With our prayer and affection, close to
Pope Francis,
Article in *Palabra*,
April 2013

We have welcomed with great joy the election of Pope Francis as Peter's successor in the See of Rome and as Supreme Pontiff of the universal Church. The festive pealing of the bells, sent ringing throughout the whole world, brought us the news we had been praying for so intently: *habemus*

Papam! And once more we experienced the the Paraclete's action who, above all the vicissitudes of the world and of history, guides and governs the Mystical Body of Christ.

From the first moment, the Holy Father has asked for our prayers to help him carry the burden that our Lord has placed on his shoulders. In this moment filled with great emotion and significance, when once again we have seen that the Church is alive, and is capable of transmitting that life to all men and women, we renew our desires to accompany Pope Francis on his path of service to the Church and the world.

Evangelization, the new evangelization, the growth of Christian life. These are the key words with which, from the first moment, the Roman Pontiff has made known to us his priorities upon beginning his pontificate. Pope Francis comes from Latin America, where faith in Christ took root more than five hundred years ago. It is a church rich in religious traditions that nourish the faith of the People of God. A church close to people who, in the midst of the spiritual and material needs and difficulties of both the poor and the rich, the educated and the unlettered, the sick and the healthy, has remained faithful to Christ for centuries, under the protection of Mary's mantle and closely united to its pastors. A church that, despite all the worldly attractions of material-

ism, has returned again and again to the sources of a true spirituality: the sacraments; devotion to our Lord, especially to his passion; a filial trust in our Lady; recourse to the intercession of the saints.

Pope Francis will transmit all of this spiritual richness to the Church on the other continents; above all to the places in Europe, North America and Oceania, where the symptoms of a certain disenchantment and spiritual erosion are more openly seen. It will mean, at the same time, a new impulse to the evangelization of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and of Latin America itself, so hungry for God.

The Roman Pontiff wants to steer us towards what is essential. "Christ is the center," he said in his audience on March 26. And in his homily at the Mass for Palm Sunday, he assured us that "Christ's Cross embraced with love never leads to sadness, but to joy, to the joy of having been saved and of doing a little of what he did on the day of his death."

This brings us to the very core of Christian life. Pope Francis insists that God's mercy is infinite, that he never tires of forgiving us. As St. Josemaría Escrivá often reminded us, "our God is a God who forgives," a Father to whom we need to have frequent recourse in the sacrament of confession.

To carry on his task, the Pope is relying on the prayer of each one of

us, and above all on the intercession of our Lady and St. Joseph. It was quite significant that his first departure from the Vatican, on the morning following his election, was to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, to place his pontificate at the feet of our Mother, the refuge and salvation of the Roman people and of the entire Church.

During the weeks that have gone by since then, there has been much discussion of the burden that has fallen on the shoulders of the Roman Pontiff, to whom is especially entrusted the unity of faith and communion in the Church. To be able to carry that weight joyfully, the Pope seeks above all the help of God, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the closeness of our Lady, the intercession of the saints. But he also asks for (and I don't mind repeating this once more) the affection and prayers of all Catholics and of many other people of good will. Let's not leave him alone! May he be able to count on our daily prayer, backed up by sacrifice and the offering of work that is well finished. In a special way let us unite ourselves to him at Holy Mass, the best moment, the most sublime one each day, to beseech God our Lord, with words of St. Josemaría: "*omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!*" — that we may all go to Jesus, closely united to the Pope, through Mary" (*The Forge*, no. 647).

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"With Christian Consistency," *Mundo Cristiano*, (May 2013)

I am grateful for the invitation to present a few reflections as *Mundo Cristiano* celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. At a time when many publications appear only to quickly disappear, a publication that lasts for a half century gives a respectable vintage to a magazine.

From the beginning of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría Escrivá made clear that his children could work in any honest task, through which they were to seek sanctity and carry out apostolate. And he used to give some specific examples: the world of industry and craftsmanship, manual work, teaching at its various levels, fashion, work in the home, research, finance, etc. Included here, he would also often cite publishing and the press, with their strong evangelizing repercussions. St. Josemaría had been a teacher in the first school of journalism begun in Spain after the civil war; and years later, in 1958, he encouraged the beginning of the Institute of Journalism, which later became the School of Communications at the University of Navarra. It was the first time in Spain that those studies were made possible in a university setting. He also encouraged similar projects in other cities on different continents.