



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF OPUS DEI

Saturday, 12 January 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to meet you at the end of the Conference held on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the Blessed Founder of *Opus Dei*. I greet the Prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarría, and I cordially thank him for his words that sum up the sentiments of devotion of all those gathered here. His words highlighted the nature and importance of your congress. More than a celebration of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, you tried to penetrate more deeply into the most current aspects of his message. In a special way you have studied *the grandeur of daily life as a path to holiness*. I greet Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne and the cardinals, bishops and priests present. I greet each one of you, who have come to Rome to take part in this important celebration.

2. From the beginning of his priestly ministry, Bl. Josemaría Escrivá put at the very heart of his preaching the truth that all the baptized are called to the fullness of *charity* and that the most direct way to attain this goal is to be found in the midst of normal daily life. The Lord wants to enter into a loving communion with each one of his children, *right in the heart of daily occupations*, in the context of everyday life.

In the light of these considerations, one's every day activities came to be seen as a valuable means for achieving union with Christ. They become the place and the matter of holiness, the playing field for exercising the virtues, and a dialogue of love that is expressed in deeds. One's work is transfigured by the spirit of prayer. Each person discovers the capacity of remaining in a contemplative relation with God even while carrying out the most diverse tasks. For every baptized person who desires to follow Christ faithfully, the factory, the office, the library, the laboratory, the workshop, the home, can be transformed into places for an encounter with the Lord, who chose to

live in obscurity for thirty years. Who can doubt that the time Jesus spent in Nazareth was an integral part of his saving mission? The same holds true for us. Daily activities, even in their seeming dullness in the monotony of actions that seem to be repeated and always the same, can also acquire *a supernatural dimension and become in a certain way transfigured*.

3. In the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, at the end of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I recalled specifically that the ideal of Christian perfection "must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few 'uncommon heroes' of holiness" Furthermore I added, "The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living" (n. 31). The Lord gives to every baptized person the grace necessary to reach the summit of divine charity. The small events of each day hold, locked with them, an unsuspected greatness. Those actions, undertaken with the love of God and neighbour, *can overcome at their very roots every division between faith and daily life*. The Second Vatican Council denounced such a division as "one of the gravest errors of our time" (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 43).

Moreover, by sanctifying one's work in accord with the norms of objective morality, the lay faithful contribute in an effective way to building up a society that is more worthy of man. They set free creation that groans and suffers waiting for the revelation of the sons of God (cf. Rom 8,19-22).

Thus the lay faithful cooperate in fashioning a truly human society that is attentive to the needs of the person and of the common good.

4. Dear brothers and sisters! Continue on with your mission enthusiastically and faithfully, following in the footsteps of your Founder. Show with your daily efforts that the love of Christ can indeed inform the whole gamut of human existence. In this way you will attain the ideal of the *unity of life* which I insisted on in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, as fundamental to the evangelization of contemporary society (cf. n. 17).

Prayer, work and the apostolate, as you learned from Bl. Josemaría, converge and fuse together when they are lived in this spirit. He always encouraged you to "*love the world passionately*".

And he added one important clarification: "Be men and women of the world but do not be worldly men and women" (*The Way*, 939). In this way you will avoid the danger of falling into a worldly mentality that views the spiritual life as something confined to the private sphere and irrelevant to the public forum. If men do not welcome the grace of God into their hearts, if they do not pray, if they do not frequent the sacraments, if they do not strive for personal holiness, they lose the very meaning of their earthly pilgrimage. The earth, your Blessed Founder reminds us, is a pathway to heaven, and the life of every believer, even with his or her burdens and limitations, can become a true temple in which dwells the Son of God made man.

5. Along this challenging spiritual and apostolic journey, may you always encounter the example and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her husband St Joseph. I entrust all of your families to their intercession. To them I entrust all of your activities, so that they may always be at the service of the Gospel. May you always work in fraternal communion and solidarity with all the other members of the Christian people and with all the other ecclesial institutions. May Bl. Josemaría continue to watch over you from Heaven, so that in every circumstance you may be faithful disciples of Christ. I assure you of the support of my prayer for reaching that goal, and I affectionately bless you, together with all of your families and all the members of your Prelature.