



PASTORAL LETTER

MSGR.
FERNANDO
OCÁRIZ

Contemplation

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 **pus Dei**
Path to the Centenary

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz

PASTORAL LETTER

ON CONTEMPLATION (16 OCTOBER 2026)

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Introduction

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

1. In last March's message, I suggested that, between October of this year and the next, in preparation for the centenary of the Work, we should reflect more deeply on the call to be "contemplatives in the middle of the world, by which our Father encapsulated many elements of the spirit of Opus Dei."^[1]

Our specific vocation leads us to desire to live a life of contemplation amid our ordinary circumstances. Opus Dei is not a path for fulfilling certain spiritual duties: that is a great deal, but, at the same time, it is not enough. Our spirit points much further: it leads us to see and love the world through God's love, to share in his way of looking. It is an ambitious invitation, for which we rely not only on our own strength, but above all on God's help. Therefore, as we prepare for the Work's centenary with a great desire to live out our vocation to the full, we can ask ourselves: Do I see myself as called to contemplation? Do I realize that, despite my defects and difficulties, God wishes to make me a contemplative in the middle of the world? Am I aware that God is calling me to find Him at each step, in each event, in each moment?

2. To understand what contemplation is, the Church's theological tradition offers us a classic definition from Saint Thomas Aquinas: Contemplation is *simplex intuitus veritatis ex caritate procedens*, a simple and intuitive looking at the truth that stems from love.^[2] It is neither a purely intellectual endeavor nor abstract speculation. Contemplation is a look filled with affection, a seeing that springs from love. As Benedict XVI said: "The Christian's program – the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus – is a 'heart that sees.' This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly."^[3] When the heart is filled with God's love, the intellect and the emotions are united in a simple act of vision. One looks at what one loves, and that looking gradually transforms the person who contemplates.

^[1] Message, 19 March 2026.

^[2] Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 180, a. 3.

^[3] Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 31.

Jesus' constant dialogue with the Father

3. Christ for us is much more than a model to be imitated: he is our life; he wants to live again his life in ours. During his time on earth, our Lord wanted to bear witness to his ongoing conversation with his Father amid a wide variety of circumstances and places. We see him praying, for example, during his baptism in the Jordan (cf. Lk 3:21); seeking out solitary places to be in silence with him (cf. Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16; 9:18); going up to a secluded mountain (cf. Mt 14:23; Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12; 9:28–29). And during his Passion, we also see him dialoguing with the Father, from his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mt 26:36–44) right up to the Cross (cf. Lk 23:34, 46).

But besides specific references to the times and forms of Jesus' prayer,^[4] we know that in reality his whole life was an unbroken dialogue, a conversation made up also of actions and looks, of work and rest. Jesus' prayer "flows through his whole life like a secret channel of water that enriches his relationships and actions, and that guides him, with progressive strength, to the total giving of himself in accord with God the Father's loving plan."^[5]

Saint Josemaría paid special attention to Christ's contemplation during the thirty years of his hidden life. That life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is contemplative and, at the same time, completely ordinary, with nothing extraordinary about it. "The fact that Jesus grew up and lived just like us," Saint Josemaría said, "shows us that our life, our ordinary daily activity, has a divine meaning. He lived in obscurity, but, for us, that period is full of light. It illuminates our days and fills them with meaning."^[6]

^[4] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2598–2616.

^[5] Benedict XVI, Audience, 30 November 2011.

^[6] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 14.

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Contemplation in Saint Josemaría's life

4. "Itinerant contemplative": that is how the Decree on his heroic virtues defined Saint Josemaría. "The most characteristic features of his personality," the document noted, "are to be found not only in his extraordinary gifts as a man of action, but also in his life of prayer and in that assiduous unitive experience which made him an itinerant contemplative."^[7] This is what we, his daughters and sons in Opus Dei, are called to be, as are all those who come into contact with the Work: to be "itinerant contemplatives," to live in dialogue with God amid the streets of our cities and the hustle and bustle of our lives; to be always with God wherever we are: in our homes, at our workplaces, in our social settings.

"Jesus, let my distractions be the other way round. Instead of recalling the world when I am engaged in conversation with you, let me rather recall you when I am engaged in the things of this world," Saint Josemaría prayed.^[8] Our founder sought to discover God behind everything that happened. He tried to detect his presence in what was apparently very earthly. He wanted to discover poetry – "heroic verse"^[9] – in actions that might seem insignificant or trivial.

5. Saint Josemaría saw a divine confirmation of this call in his intense experiences of prayer amid the world's distractions: while reading the newspaper, traveling on a streetcar, amid the noise and bustle of a big city – situations, in short, like so many others in our own lives.

"I want to record something, because it is rather odd: Jesus tends to grant me prayer when I start to read the newspaper," he once wrote.^[10] A few days later, he noted down something similar: "Last Saturday I was in Retiro Park, and I tried to read a newspaper. Prayer came upon me with such force that, against my will, I had to stop reading. And then, how many acts of love and abandonment Jesus put in my heart and on my lips!"^[11] He also recorded his prayer amid his daily travels: "My most intense prayer came while traveling on a tram and, afterwards, as I wandered through the streets of Madrid, contemplating this marvelous reality: God is my Father."^[12] On the date on which I am sending you this letter, it is exactly 95 years since that experience.^[13]

Early in the second half of the 20th century, something similar happened to him during his first visit to the city of London, one of the world's great multicultural capitals: "As I took in that scene, I was taken aback and felt helpless, powerless: 'Josemaría, here you can't do anything.' I was absolutely right. On my own I would not achieve anything; without God, I couldn't even lift a piece of straw off the ground . . . Then suddenly, in the middle of a street, with people from all over the world coming and going, inside me, deep in my heart, I felt the effectiveness of God's arm: 'You can do nothing, but I can do everything.'"^[14]

This is the path the Holy Spirit invites us to travel through Saint Josemaría: to walk through life with the confidence and strength that come from being God's beloved children, living and sharing everything with Him. Or, to put it in words of the Master that left an indelible impression on his beloved disciple, *remaining in him*.^[15]

[7] Decree on the Heroic Virtues of the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá, 9 April 1990.

[8] *The Forge*, no. 1014.

[9] *Conversations*, no. 116.

[10] *Intimate Notes*, no. 618 (26 February 1932).

[11] *Ibid.*, no. 619 (29 February 1932).

[12] *Instruction on the Work of St. Gabriel*, no. 22, note 28.

[13] Specifically, on 16 October 1931 (cf. Andres Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. I, p. 294). Looking back on this moment years later, he would write: "I was contemplating, with lights that were not mine, that amazing truth. It was like a lighted coal burning in my soul, never to be extinguished" (*Letter 15*, no. 41).

[14] Meditation, 2 November 1958 (quoted in Andres Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. III, pg. 238).

[15] Cf. for example Jn 15:4 ff.; 1 Jn 2:6 ff.; 4:12 ff.

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In a fast-paced world

6. Commentators on the contemporary world recognize in our society a tendency towards activism, towards devoting one's life solely to work: the efforts of many people seem directed almost exclusively towards increased productivity, in order to attain well-being through the accumulation of material goods, experiences, social prestige... Added to this are the effects, in almost every sphere, of the constant presence of technologies which, when not used wisely, can isolate us, hinder contact with others, and even make it harder for us to be open to listening to God and to others. Indeed, people talk of a genuine crisis of contemplation and attention, which is so essential for one's inner life and for love of our fellow men and women. Our capacity for attention is fragmented by many competing interests vying for our attention. As Leo XIV recently pointed out, "new technologies have created an artificial environment where our fundamental choices are put to the test."^[16]

7. Faced with this situation, much of today's world is seeking ways to give people relief, to provide a meaning for life that goes beyond mere feverish activity. This may explain, at least in part, the interest in the "spiritual" that one can see in some countries for several decades now. There is a proliferation of offerings which, in the end, are in many cases incomplete, because they fall short when compared with the fullness of supernatural and human life offered to us by Christ.

While some approaches do not go beyond the fragile securities of material things, or of well-being in worldly terms, "at the same time we see many signs of a reawakening of the religious sense, a rediscovery of the importance of God to the human being's life, a need for spirituality, for going beyond a purely horizontal and materialistic vision of human life."^[17] We have all surely sensed around us this spiritual thirst, which yearns to discover contemplation, the company and peace of God.

8. Saint Josemaría invited all Christians to "be souls of prayer," contemplative souls in the middle of the world, with words that are relevant for any age, even amid today's secularisation and growing technological development: "As long as I have strength to breathe, I will continue to preach that it is vitally necessary that we be souls of prayer at all times, at every opportunity and in the most varied of circumstances, because God never abandons us . . . When we seek our Lord in this way, our whole day becomes one intimate and trusting conversation with him. I have said and written this so many times, but I don't mind saying it again, because our Lord has shown us by his example that this is exactly what we have to do: we have to pray at all times, from morning to night and from night to

morning.”^[18] In fact, we are living in very favourable circumstances – the world is begging for it – to pass on this vision.

Last year, during the homily at the Mass for the liturgical memorial of Saint Josemaría, I reflected that our “thirst for the infinite manifests itself in many ways, though not all the ways of quenching it leave the heart satisfied. Perhaps we have experienced wasting time aspiring to a happiness built solely on material goods, success or comfort. We know, however, that only God gives meaning to all realities and fulfils the desires of our heart.”^[19] It is this thirst for spirituality, this longing for God that beats deep within the heart of every person – even those who seem furthest from the Church – that makes the proclamation of God’s invitation to be contemplatives in the middle of the world particularly necessary.

^[16] Leo XIV, *Address*, 6 June 2026.

^[17] Benedict XVI, *Audience*, 11 May 2011.

^[18] *Friends of God*, no. 247.

^[19] Homily, 26 June 2025.

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“I will seek your face, Lord!”

9. The inner dynamism of love is the search for the beloved. Those who love are not content with a superficial knowledge, with knowing a few things about the beloved: they long to contemplate his face, to be in his presence, to hear his voice. Genuine Christian prayer is marked by that filial cry of the psalmist: *Vultum tuum, Domine, requiram* (Ps 27 [26]:8), “I will seek your face, Lord!”

Our Father experienced and advised this passionate search for Christ’s face in the midst of ordinary life. In one of his homilies, with the conviction that comes from lived experience, he spoke about how someone who loves God feels an irrepressible need to seek Him continually: “First one brief aspiration, then another, and another... till our fervour seems insufficient, because words are too poor...: then this gives way to intimacy with God, looking at God without needing rest or feeling tired. We begin to live as captives, as prisoners. And while we carry out as perfectly as we can (with all our mistakes and limitations) the tasks allotted to us by our situation and duties, our soul longs to escape. It is drawn towards God like iron by a magnet. One begins to love Jesus in a more effective way, with the sweet and gentle surprise of his encounter.”^[20]

A soul that seeks our Lord’s face in ordinary life discovers right there a privileged place for that encounter. Contemplation is not reserved for a select few, nor is it a goal solely for those who withdraw from the world. The desire to see God takes shape in the heart of our daily activities. We encounter our Lord at our work desk, in caring for our family, in our social relationships and in our moments of rest. Love leads us to discover Christ there. He looks at us with love and invites us to turn the eyes of our heart to him.

^[20] *Friends of God*, no. 296.

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Seeing God in everything

10. This loving look profoundly transforms our understanding of reality. We begin to see reasons for gratitude and praise where before we saw only problems. We begin to sense God's constant care where before we thought we were abandoned to our own fate. We begin to converse with Him where before we merely fed our inner monologue. "Wherever we happen to be – in the hubbub of the street and in the middle of all human occupations, in the factory, at the university, on the farm, in the office or at home – we will find ourselves engaged in simple filial contemplation, in an uninterrupted conversation with God. This is because everything – people, things, tasks – offers us both an opportunity and a theme for continual conversation with God."^[21]

Faith opens our eyes to perceive God's ever-active presence here and now. And thus we discover the incalculable value of every moment and situation, knowing that at every moment we are the object of the Father's infinite love. We recognize the tender care of his Providence in the small and great events of each day. Joys, difficulties, successes and setbacks become the "raw material" and setting for conversation with our Lord. Nothing is neutral. Nothing lacks supernatural value if it is done out of love and with a desire to serve, to be a source of support for others.

^[21] *Letter 6*, no. 15.

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Looking to heaven while keeping our feet on the ground

11. The risk exists of confusing the spiritual life with a sentimental escape from daily duties, or with taking refuge in abstract ideals. In contrast, authentic Christian contemplation has its roots in the Incarnation. God does not ask us to gaze at the clouds in a fruitless reverie, but rather to lift our eyes to heaven precisely through what we are experiencing, what we are engaged in; and also through the unexpected events and setbacks of each day, which are a constant feature of ordinary life.

As well as the necessary times of recollection devoted to prayer, work that is well done, attention to one's family, civic duties and friendships are also for us places for contemplation. In his homily *Passionately Loving the World*, Saint Josemaría expressed this with great force: "There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Christ."^[22]

In short, contemplation does not detach us from our earthly responsibilities. On the contrary, it leads us to fulfil them with effort and affection, because we see them and love them with God, and in God. That is why our Father spoke to us of living "every moment of our lives with a lively awareness of eternity."^[23]

12. A soul that has tasted the sweetness of the divine presence experiences a holy tension: both the ardent desire for full union with God in heaven, along with the awareness of the mission our Lord has entrusted to us in this world. Saint Josemaría described this inner state, in which discursive prayer is transformed into a more serene and deep contemplation: "Words are too poor...: then this gives way to intimacy with God, looking at God without needing rest or feeling tired. One does not reason; one looks! And the soul breaks out once more into song, a new song, because it feels and knows it is under the loving gaze of God, all day long."^[24]

Far from taking us away from the present moment, this contemplation brings us closer to it. Raised up by God's grace, we experience the joyful paradox of being "both in heaven and on earth at the same time." Our feet are firmly planted on the ground, confronting the problems, struggles and hopes of our contemporaries, while our heart and mind remain anchored "in the current of love that is the mystery of God, One in Three."^[25]

Saint Augustine expressed this dual belonging – to the world and to heaven – with particular clarity: “Your affections are the steps. Your will is the path. By loving, you ascend. By neglecting, you descend. By loving God, you will be in heaven, even while you are on earth. The heart is not lifted up in the same way as the body. To lift up the body, one must change its position. To lift up your heart, change your will.”^[26]

^[22] *Conversations*, no. 114.

^[23] *Friends of God*, no. 239.

^[24] *Ibid.*, nos. 296 and 307.

^[25] *Ibid.*, no. 252.

^[26] St. Augustine, *Sermon on Psalm 85*, 6.

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Time is short

13. The secular nature of our vocation to the Work does not cause us to lose sight of our destination. We journey through history knowing that our true homeland is in heaven (cf. Phil 3:20). This awareness of the passing of time imbues our lives with a profound sense of urgency to love. Saint Paul warns us: *Tempus breve est* (1 Cor 7:29), time is short. This is not a cause for anxiety, but rather an encouragement to take full advantage, with serenity, of every opportunity God offers us to bear fruits of charity.

Saint Josemaría often reflected on this reality to encourage us to respond with a generous and joyful self-giving: “*Tempus breve est!* (1 Cor 7:29), How short indeed is the time of our passing through this world! Brief indeed is our time for loving, for giving, for making atonement. It would be very wrong, therefore, for us to waste it, or to cast this treasure irresponsibly overboard. We mustn’t squander this period of the world’s history which God has entrusted to each one of us.”^[27]

Time is the talent our Lord has placed in our hands, so that we may sanctify it. Every hour of work, every gesture of affection, every small act of kindness towards others is a coin for eternity. When we consider our ultimate goal of glory, we realize that the love we put into the small and great things of each day is the only thing that will last for ever.

^[27] *Friends of God*, no. 39.

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Contemplation is a gift from God

14. It is also good to remember that contemplation is not simply the result of human techniques or psychological methods of concentration. Contemplation is, above all, a free gift from God, a grace that the Holy Spirit grants to humble and docile hearts. As Saint Teresa said: “This is something that God gives.”^[28]

Hence contemplation requires an attitude of trust and childlike surrender to God. We have to ask our Lord for the light we need to see things as he sees them. Saint Josemaría used to beseech him in his prayer: “Lord, let me see with your eyes, my Christ, dear Jesus.” Help me to look at the world, at people and at events with the clarity of your truth and the tenderness of your heart. Or, as he implored our Lord on another occasion: “Lord, may I see! Enlighten my intelligence and let Christ’s words penetrate deep into my mind. Strengthen his Life in my soul so that I may be transformed in readiness for eternal Glory.”^[29]

15. Although contemplation is a gift beyond the reach of human strength alone, it requires active cooperation on our part. We know full well that grace does not replace nature, but presupposes and perfects it. Hence the path towards the contemplative life demands a serene yet constant struggle.

First of all, fidelity to daily mental prayer is essential. We need these exclusive moments of encounter alone with God, where we learn to listen to his voice and to conform our will to his. In mental prayer, the soul is renewed and acquires the spiritual tone needed to keep up a constant dialogue with God – so often without words – during the rest of the day. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us: “We cannot pray ‘at all times’ if we do not pray, with special dedication, at specific times. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration.”^[30]

Secondly, we need to cultivate an awareness of God’s presence throughout the day. As well as asking God for the gift of unceasing prayer, there are certain human means that prepare us for it and make it possible during the day: the active seeking of moments of silence, the strength to remain focused on a single activity, perseverance in constant work, the humility to listen, contact with nature, openness to sincere friendship, among many other ways. As our Lord tells us in the Gospel, it is up to us to prepare the soil of our heart to bear fruit from the grace that God is constantly offering us (cf. Mt 13:1–23). Pope Leo XIV recently urged us to promote “a genuinely healthy attitude, requiring rhythms that incorporate silence, in-depth study, reading and judicious analysis, for without these elements inner freedom may be compromised;”^[31] and, consequently, our capacity to pray.

16. Saint Josemaría warned us against the illusion of those who hope to attain spiritual maturity passively. The passage of time alone does not perfect a person: “Years alone don’t confer either wisdom or holiness.”^[32] What brings wisdom and holiness is a humble and persevering response to God’s grace. We need to struggle every day, in little things, without growing weary, with the realization that holiness does not consist in being free from faults, but in always beginning again with humility, knowing we are guided by God. This daily struggle is not – nor should it be – a rigid tension, but rather the loving and trusting effort of a child who wants to let himself be found by his Father God, and who knows that he is pleasing to Him even when, despite his good will, he stumbles or makes a mistake.

^[28] St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, chap. 17, 2.

^[29] *Friends of God*, no. 127.

^[30] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2697.

^[31] Leo XIV, *Magnifica humanitas*, no. 146.

^[32] *In Dialogue with the Lord*, no. 79.

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Blessed are the pure in heart

17. The Gospel beatitude points to an indispensable condition for contemplation: *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). Purity of heart is not limited exclusively to the virtue of chastity, although it necessarily includes it. Purity of heart means the soul’s inner freedom from every disordered attachment to self-love, wealth, personal success or one’s own opinions. To have a pure heart is to have it unclouded and free to love God and others. Anyone who is full of themselves, of their own judgements and selfishness, cannot see God, because their spiritual vision is clouded.

This also helps us to understand the special importance of the virtues of chastity and poverty for the freedom of our heart. It is a common spiritual experience to recognize the need for both on the path to holiness. As Saint Josemaría wrote in some notes from 1932, which he later included in *The Way*: “Remove, Jesus, that filthy crust of sensual corruption which covers my heart, so that I can feel and readily follow the touches of the Paraclete on my soul.”^[33] He also wrote the following regarding poverty: “If you are a man of God, you will seek to despise riches as intensely as men of the world seek to possess them.”^[34] This is by no means a matter of contempt for what God has created. Rather, it is a call to view our life without naivety, knowing that we can easily lose our freedom if our heart becomes unduly attached to material goods. To be a contemplative in the middle of the world, we need to have great care with these areas in our personal examination of conscience, and also take decisive action should we encounter significant difficulties.

18. One thing that can help purify our heart of disordered attachments is mortification and penance, both internal and external. And hence Saint Josemaría often saw mortification as a path to gain “a proper dominion over the things of this earth”^[35] – to be truly free, masters of ourselves, so that we find it easy to open our heart to God and those around us through what he vividly called the “prayer of the senses.”^[36] On this path of penance, so essential for purifying our heart and living as contemplatives, we need to never lose sight of the fact that everything should be motivated by love, because “mortification is useless without charity.”^[37]

^[33] *The Way*, no. 130.

^[34] *Ibid.*, no. 633.

^[35] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 37.

[36] *Ibid.*, no. 9.

[37] *Ibid.*, no. 37.

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Seeing God in those around us

19. The contemplative life does not enclose a Christian in a private intimacy. On the contrary, authentic contemplation expands our heart and opens our eyes to our brothers and sisters. Those who learn to see God in prayer also learn to discover his image and presence in the people around them.

Saint Josemaría reminds us that we cannot separate love for God from love for others. Affection for those close to us, being understanding with a colleague, showing charity to the needy, developing sincere friendships... – all of this needs to be transformed by God's love. We don't have one heart for loving God and another for loving those around us: we love with the same heart.^[38]

Our contemplation is manifested in the quality of our fraternal charity. Refinement in our dealings with others, respect for their freedom, a spirit of joyful service and the ability to listen, are specific signs of a life of sincere prayer: they show that we realize God is waiting for us in others (cf. Mt 25:40).

^[38] Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 166.

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As beloved children

20. The foundation of our spirit is the joyful awareness of our divine filiation. We are truly children of God in Christ. True human and Christian fraternity flows directly from this reality. In knowing ourselves to be children of the same Father, we regard others “as beloved children” of God. We realize the dignity each person possesses, as created in God’s image. Specifically, recognizing the priceless value of every soul should lead us to have a genuine affection for them. Each person is worth all the blood of Christ. This truth frees us from judging by appearances or by others’ faults, and impels us to love one another sincerely, in deed and in truth.

When we contemplate the mystery of the Redemption, we realize more fully that love for others cannot be selective or conditional. Charity demands that we overcome prejudices and differences in temperament or mentality, always seeking what unites us and building bridges of communion. In our daily interactions, inevitably marked by human limitations and weaknesses, contemplative charity is most clearly manifested in patience, understanding and forgiveness.

21. Anyone who knows they have been forgiven by God cannot harbor grudges or resentment. Saint Josemaría left us an unforgettable teaching on forgiveness, born of his own experience and his deep life of prayer: “I haven’t needed to learn how to forgive, because our Lord has taught me how to love.”^[39] Understanding, true charity, always involves knowing how to excuse, to forgive, to never keep a record of wrongs suffered. Understanding others involves much more than tolerating: it means putting oneself in the other person’s shoes, excusing their faults and helping them with refinement to overcome them.

Forgiveness is not weakness, but the highest manifestation of the strength of Christian love. By forgiving offenses, whether great or small, Christians reflect God’s merciful face upon the world. In a world torn apart by divisions and conflicts, all of Christ’s disciples are called, in one way or another, to be sowers of peace and joy, dispelling the darkness of hatred with the light of faith and the strength of charity.

^[39] *Furrow*, no. 804.

Thirsting for souls

22. “Whenever sanctity is genuine, it overflows from its vessel to fill other hearts, other souls, with its superabundance.”^[40] Hence, contemplation in the middle of the world naturally gives rise to an intense apostolic zeal. It is impossible to sense God’s love for all men and women without feeling a burning desire to share that love with everyone.

A contemplative soul looks upon the world through apostolic eyes. They don’t merely lament the difficulties of the times or the obstacles sometimes placed in the way by societies that have turned away from God, but rather discover in every situation an opportunity to bring the light of the Gospel. Their view of the world is one of hope and deep compassion towards those who are wandering without direction, aware that, despite everything, these persons may actually be better than themselves (cf. Mt 21:31).

23. Saint Josemaría summed up the union between contemplation and apostolate in these words: “The interior life implies a growth in union with Christ, in the Bread and in the Word. And apostolic zeal is the precise and necessary outward manifestation of interior life.”^[41] Thus we understand why the life of prayer, when it is authentic, is not dampened by the self-centredness of spiritual complacency: it is a fire that burns, that sets ablaze, that spurs one to be apostolic. For a Christian, the apostolate is not a supplementary task, an occupation for one’s spare moments; it is the vital need to pass on to others the truth and love that fill one’s own soul.

“We don’t ‘do apostolate,’ we are apostles!”, I wrote to you some years ago.^[42] In the same vein, we could say that we don’t practice contemplation: we are contemplatives. Contemplation is not something we do from time to time, alongside other things: it is a way of being and of seeing life, in God and from God, which shapes everything we do, everything we experience, everything we feel. And therefore contemplation, work, fraternity and the apostolate are dimensions of a single Christian life. In contemplating God in our prayer, we also discover Him in our work, we love Him in our brothers and sisters, and we proclaim Him with joy to the whole world.

* * *

24. As I bring this letter to a close, I wish to turn my eyes to the Blessed Virgin Mary, teacher of contemplation in ordinary life. In the home of Nazareth, amid the simplest domestic tasks, Mary contemplated her Son. “Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: ‘She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart’ (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51). The memories of Jesus, impressed

upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the 'rosary' which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life."^[43]

Let us ask our Mother to help us travel along this path towards the centenary with the eyes of our mind and heart fixed on Jesus, striving, in spite of our personal weakness, to be faithful witnesses to Christ's charity in the middle of the world.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Rome, October 16, 2026

^[40] *The Forge*, no. 856.

^[41] *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 122.

^[42] Pastoral Letter, 14 February 2017, no. 9.

^[43] Saint John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no.11

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