

# LETTERS

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

## ABOUT SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPIRIT OF OPUS DEI

11 MARCH 1940

*Créete ante los obstáculos  
gracia de Dios no se  
lter! Inter medium mo  
transmitten aqua - p  
través de los montes!  
¿Qué importa que de  
de recordar tu ac  
elle q*

St. Josemaria Escriva

**LETTER OF SAINT JOSEMARIA ABOUT SOME  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPIRIT OF OPUS DEI**

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## Content

The *Letter* deals with various aspects of the spirit of Opus Dei, which the founder wishes to present in its genuine simplicity. Hence the Latin *incipit Sincerus est*.

As happens in several of his *Letters*, St Josemaría moves from one topic to another, without following a rigid outline and returning from time to time to something already treated, in *apparent disorder*, as he explains in another *Letter* in this volume.

There is, however, a common thread. He attempts to show the specificity of the spirit he preaches and its roots in the Gospel; its similarity to the life of the first Christians. And then to clarify, as a consequence, its differences from other vocations and paths in the Church. He stresses, above all, the secularity of dedication in Opus Dei and other features that are in part common to all forms of Christian dedication, and in part proper to it, due to the particular way in which they are lived in the Work he founded.

For example, although the awareness of one's own divine filiation is essential for all Christians, St Josemaría would stress it even more, pointing it out as the foundation of the spiritual life in Opus Dei (no. 2). It can also be said that the mission of the Work is the same as that of the Church, for it seeks to restore the world in Christ (*ibid*), enlightening people with the light of God (no. 3). But in the case of Opus Dei, that mission is concentrated in a special way on secular occupations (no. 9). A member of Opus Dei is no different from other ordinary Christians (nos. 9-10), and is eager to place Christ at the summit of human activities (no. 12), paying special attention to work, which becomes a means of sanctification (no. 13). He or she practises a person-to-person apostolate, in a climate of friendship and understanding (nos. 14, 54-55, 64-69, 70-72). All this is sustained by a contemplative life, leading to a *unity of life* (nos. 14-16) – to coherence – and seasoned by a characteristic spirit of freedom (no. 37).

At various points, St Josemaría speaks of the conflicts and difficulties Opus Dei has encountered on its journey, raised by those who have not understood what seems to the founder to be a simple and clear spirit (nos. 17-20, 43-45). Above all, he rejects the accusation of secrecy (nos. 56-60).

The background to his exposition is within the context of identification with Christ (no. 11) and the call to bring the Gospel to all mankind. For him, this evangelising task is carried out by means of a friendship filled with understanding, by fostering unity with all people and by practising a tolerant compromise with people (nos. 54-55, 64-69, 70-71). All this is presided over by good example (nos. 51-53) and completed by an exposition of Christian doctrine

that tries to accommodate the mentality of the listeners (nos. 47-48).

Other virtues or characteristics that St Josemaría mentions, as especially dear to Opus Dei, are humility (no. 4), unity in what is fundamental and diversity in what is open to different opinions (no. 27), poverty (no. 28), joy and gratitude to God (no. 29) and sincerity (no. 61).

There are also several references to the need, for the spirit he is describing, to be represented by a juridical formula that adequately reflects its singular nature (nos. 73-75).

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## Letter 6

Madrid, 11 March 1940

1. The spirit of Opus Dei is straightforward, frank and genuine. It is based on Sacred Scripture, which is inspired by God, who is infinitely simple and who says of himself that he *is the true God* (Jer 10:10), that he is truthful,<sup>[1]</sup> that he is Truth itself.<sup>[2]</sup>

Today I would like to remind you of some points of this clear, loyal spirit of ours, commenting on some of its characteristics. For the Lord, my daughters and sons, by enkindling in me a lively desire to address you frequently, makes me understand very well the beautiful words of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians: *filioli mei, quos iterum parturio donec formetur Christus in vobis* (Gal 4:19); my little children, for whom I suffer a second time, until Christ is completely formed in you.

I would love you to learn how to meditate on all that I am writing to you, and live it out faithfully, so that what was said of the first Christians can be said of you too. “They all learnt what they ought to do, and not only learnt it but put it eagerly into practice. They practised it not only in the cities and market-places but on the mountain-tops”<sup>[3]</sup> – everywhere.

2. The spirit of the Work is one which leads us to feel our divine filiation very deeply: *carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus* (1 John 3:2); dearest ones, we are children of God, here and now. This joyful truth is the foundation of our whole spiritual life. It fills our inner struggle and our apostolic tasks with hope. It teaches us to get to know our Father God, to talk to him and love him with the trusting simplicity of children. Moreover, the very fact of being God’s children also leads us to contemplate, love and admire all the things that have come from the hands of God the Father and Creator.

The world, my children, and everything that the Lord has created are good. Sacred Scripture teaches us that when the marvellous work of Creation was finished, when heaven and earth with their splendid array of creatures were complete,<sup>[4]</sup> *God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good* (Gen 1:31).

It was Adam's sin that broke this divine harmony of Creation. But in the fullness of time, God the Father sent his Only-Begotten Son to the world to re-establish peace by redeeming man from sin, so that *adoptionem filiorum reciperemus* (Gal 4:5), we might receive adoption as children and share in God's inner life; and so that this new man, this new branch of God's children,<sup>[5]</sup> would be able to free all creation from disorder, restoring all things in Christ,<sup>[6]</sup> who has reconciled them with God.<sup>[7]</sup>

It is to this, my children, that we have been called; this must be our apostolic task, which, with its own spirituality and specific asceticism, fits beautifully into the one mission of Christ and his Church.

The Lord calls us to imitate him as well-beloved children of his –*estote ergo imitatores Dei, sicut filii carissimi* (Eph 5:1), be imitators of God as beloved children – cooperating humbly and fervently in God's plan to join together again what is broken, to rescue what is lost, to straighten out what man has left in disorder, to bring to its true goal what has gone off course; to restore God's harmony to all creation.

3. I remind you with St John: *Videte qualem caritatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*<sup>[8]</sup> We call ourselves, and truly are, children of God, brothers and sisters therefore of the Word made flesh,<sup>[9]</sup> of Jesus Christ, about whom it was said: *In ipso vita erat, et vita erat lux hominum* (John 1:4); in him was life, and this life was the light of men.

Children of the light, brothers and sisters of the light: such we are. Bearers of the only flame that can light up the paths of the earth for souls, of the only brightness which can never be darkened, dimmed or overshadowed.

*Et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt* (John 1:5). And this light shines in the midst of darkness, and the darkness has not received it. Our Lord continues pouring forth his splendours on mankind: a light that is life and the warmth of mercy, for He is charity, love.<sup>[10]</sup> After enkindling and filling our souls with the fire of divine light,<sup>[11]</sup> he makes use of us as torches to illumine others, to bring them life.

My daughters and sons, it partly depends on us whether many souls no longer remain in darkness, but begin walking along paths that lead to eternal life. And so, contemplating this immense panorama offered to us by the vocation with which the Lord has graciously wished to honour us, I am reminded of those other words of the Apostle John, which we must repeat to so many people: *That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete* (1 John 1:3-4).

4. We should often give thanks for this marvellous call which we have received from God, with a real, deep sense of gratitude, closely united to humility, which, in the soul of each of us, must be the first consequence of the light bestowed by the Lord's infinite mercy. *Quid autem habes quod non accepisti?* (1 Cor 4:7): What do you have that you have not received from God?

But not only that. *Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est (1 John 1:8)*; if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. On the other hand, if we are humble, if we are truthful, the failings that spring from human weakness and the difficulties that may come our way will never prevent God's light and love from dwelling in us. Only in this way will we be acting as faithful children of the light, objects of God's continual mercy and effective instruments of his will.

Humility like that will nurture a great sense of confidence in our souls, and radiate it around us: *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2)*.

My children, we need humility and confidence to look at the path God has marked out for us, understand it correctly, and follow it faithfully. That sort of faithfulness – total commitment – will constantly give us the certainty that we really have found Christ, that with him we are fulfilling his Father's will, and that our filial response to the vocation we have received is genuine.

And we hear St Paul's words: *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth (Eph 3:17-18)* of this mystery: we will know, in all its dimensions, what it is to live with Christ.

5. Don't forget that the unity of life required by our calling to the Work of God demands a generous spirit of sacrifice and great self-denial. We are making our way along a divine path, and we must follow in Jesus Christ's footsteps, carrying our own cross, the Holy Cross! God our Lord expects us to be generous in our efforts, and to feel very lucky to be able to sacrifice ourselves in order to take the Work forward.

In this way we will succeed in ploughing up many of God's fields which have not yet received the seed of salvation. We will overcome so much resistance from those who oppose Jesus Christ and his Church – including sometimes, unfortunately, resistance by some who call themselves his friends – who hinder the freedom of God's children and the fulfilment of his Kingdom of charity, justice and peace. And we will also bring new life, each through our own free and responsible work, to noble human institutions and Christian environments that are moribund.

Yes, my children, I assure you that we will contribute powerfully to enlightening the life and work of mankind, through the divine radiance which God has deposited in our souls. But don't forget: *Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked (1 John 2:6)*: a way that always leads to victory, but that just as surely passes through sacrifice.

6. It is not my purpose in this letter to give a detailed exposition of the main demands of our vocation. However, since I have allowed myself to be led by St John to speak to you of the need for sacrifice in fulfilling the Father's will, let me now remind you of the teaching which the same apostle gave to the first Christians, who were also eager to know the obligations of their Christian

vocation.

It is a teaching which has all the authentic, perennial timeliness of the Gospel, made clearer to our eyes, through God's special grace, by the light that our deep sense of divine filiation infuses in our souls. *Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever who loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes (1 John 2:7-11).*

My children, ours is a pathway of love. Love for God, who is our Father; and sincere, constant, sensitive, fraternal charity. You should exercise charity always and in everything, for the charity of our heavenly Father is constantly being poured into our hearts.<sup>[12]</sup> United in God's charity, *consummati in unum*,<sup>[13]</sup> living out Our Lord's *mandatum novum*,<sup>[14]</sup> we will be God's light and warmth among men, and strong as a walled city. *Frater qui adiuvatur a fratre quasi civitas firma (Prov 18:19)*, a brother helped by his brother is like a fortified city.

7. I don't mean to dwell at length here on the marvels of supernatural charity and the real, affectionate love that have been part of your life from the very beginning of the Work. Many souls have discovered the Gospel in the Christian warmth they find in our home, where no one can feel alone, and no one can suffer the bitterness of other people's indifference.

But I must not cease to remind you insistently that it is Christ's charity that urges us on: *Caritas enim Christi urget nos (2 Cor 5:14)*. Our Lord asks us for a love that knows no limits, a love that is shown in deeds of service<sup>[15]</sup> for all people of every nation, tongue, religion, or race, because Jesus Christ died for everyone, so that all might become children of God, our brothers and sisters. Within the order of charity, there can be no discrimination on the grounds of a person's views or position regarding worldly matters, since our objectives are exclusively supernatural.

If we work like that, fraternally, loyally, shoulder to shoulder with everyone, and teach other people to do the same, we will be showing the Holy Church as a living reality, which lives in a special way in her saints, for there are always saints in some part of the Mystical Body.

We need to show sincere love for all mankind – a necessary manifestation of the love we have for God;<sup>[16]</sup> and love for the world we live in too, love for all the noble realities of the earth, which are also the object of God's love.<sup>[17]</sup> So just forget about your own smallness and wretchedness, my daughters and sons, and set your eyes and heart on this surging river of living water, the Work, which is doing all it can to help fill mankind with charity, joy and peace.

8. Since, as I reminded you earlier, our divine filiation is the firm foundation of our spiritual life, try to meditate often on St Paul's words: *All who are led by the*



*Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom 8:14-17).*

These words sum up our relationship with God the Father, in union with his Son and with the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, in view of the divine inheritance that awaits us if we are faithful to the apostolic task that belongs to us on this earth because of our vocation.

*Postula a me, et dabo tibi gentes haereditatem tuam, et possessionem tuam terminos terrae (Ps 2:8); ask me, and I will give you all the nations as an inheritance, and I will extend your dominion to the ends of the earth. We have, therefore, the right and the duty to take the doctrine of Jesus Christ into all spheres of human life, bringing the spirit of the Lord everywhere, divinising all the tasks of this world.*

We have the right and duty to bring everything created by God, the work of his creation, closer to God, without ever violating the demands of the natural order; for, says St Paul, *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Cor 3:22-23).*

9. We are children of the light, as I was saying, in order to be the light of the world. *You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:14, 16).* We have to be light for the world, my children, while living quite naturally on this earth, since it is the normal setting for our life. We share in all the noble activities and tasks of other men and women, working alongside them at our jobs. We exercise our rights and fulfil our duties, which are the same as those of other citizens, our equals, in the society in which we live. But we always remain free from any tie that could slow down our loving fulfilment of God's will.

Therefore, amid our everyday occupations in the world, we must continually seek unbroken conversation and union with Jesus Christ. Then the fire he has enkindled in our hearts will never die out or burn low. People around us need to sense truly that we are God's light shining on the world.

10. Our life, therefore, is a divine commitment – I wish to have it set out in a simple civil contract of employment, which I will explain to you one day – which helps us to live, not by religious vows, but by the Christian virtues; *now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life (Rom 6:22).*

We Christians, who know we are free, willingly lose our freedom for the love of Jesus Christ, so as to be servants of our fellow human beings. We are convinced that our commitment of love for God and of service to the Church is not something to be put on and taken off like a garment. It encompasses our whole life and, with the help of grace, we want it to do so always. We should not seem to others like exotic beasts, like a white elephant or some other strange creature,

whether repulsive or marvellous, which is kept in a cage and looked at with curiosity, wonder or revulsion.

We are the same as our fellow citizens; that is why *we must always live in the street, go out into the street or at least lean out of the window*. We have a duty to dissolve into the crowd like the salt of Christ, seasoning society. Thus, we make no distinctions of any kind, because our particular spirit does not allow them; we are the same as our relatives, friends and colleagues regarding the noble concerns of the world. Then we will help people see that they cannot live for transient things alone, that they will never be happy that way. We will help them to raise their minds and hearts to heaven, and they will rejoice in the knowledge that man is not an animal.

We should be light and a blazing fire, like the fire ever burning on the altar;<sup>[18]</sup> to bring others to God, in accordance with their particular circumstances, responding to Christ's call, *Venite ad me omnes (Matt 11:28)*, come to me, all of you. Or else to bring God to others, when Our Lord can be heard saying, *Ecce sto ad ostium et pulso (Rev 3:20)*; behold, I stand at your door and knock.

But truly zealous Christians must not forget that they need to remain serenely balanced between these two positions, because if, on the one hand the Lord says *ecce venio cito et merces mea mecum est (Rev 22:12)*, behold, I am coming soon, bringing with me the reward, to give to every man according to his works, he also says through St Matthew that souls must force their way to him.<sup>[19]</sup>

It is enough for us to recall a wonderful passage, after the Resurrection: on the road, the Lord joins those disciples who are sad and wavering in faith. And when he has opened to them the meaning of the Scriptures, having arrived at Emmaus, he makes as if to go on further. Cleopas and his companion, speaking in a way that is full of divine and human tenderness, beg him, *mane nobiscum, quoniam advesperascit, et inclinata est iam dies;*<sup>[20]</sup> stay with us, for it is night without you.

**11.** The Son of God became man and died on the Cross, and he did so in order that all of us human beings might become one with him and with the Father.<sup>[21]</sup> Therefore we are all called to form part of this divine unity. With a priestly soul, making the holy Mass the centre of our interior life, we seek to stand with Jesus, between God and men.

Our union with Christ makes us aware that we are co-redeeming the world with him, helping all souls to share in the fruit of his Passion and to learn about and follow the path of salvation that leads to God the Father.

I will never stop stressing this. In order to be united to Christ in our earthly occupations, we must embrace the Cross generously and wholeheartedly. The salt of our life, my daughters and sons, is mortification, which must accompany our daily work perceptively and intelligently, to maintain our supernatural life just as our heartbeat maintains the life of our body.

In this way we will show the other people living and working among this world's earthly realities, the meaning of Christ's priestly prayer: *Pater sancte, serva eos in nomine tuo, quos dedisti mihi ... Non rogo ut tollas eos de mundo, sed ut serves eos*

*a malo. De mundo non sunt, sicut et ego non sum de mundo (John 17:11,15-16).* Holy Father, protect in your name those whom you have given me ... I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

12. My dearest children, all these are ideas that come to my mind, as they will also come to yours, when I reflect on the magnitude of our apostolic task among all human endeavours, while also keeping in mind the words of Jesus, together with the scenes of his death – his triumph, his victory – on the Cross: *Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum (John 12:32Vg)*; when I am raised on high on the earth, I will draw everything to myself.

United to Christ by prayer and mortification in our daily work, in the countless human circumstances of our simple life as ordinary Christians, we will work the wonder of placing all things at the feet of Our Lord on the Cross, where he let himself be nailed because of his immense love for the world and all mankind.

As simply as that, by working for love of God in our profession or job, the same one we had when he came to seek us out, we fulfil the apostolic task of placing Christ at the summit and at the heart of all human activities. For no honest human job lies outside the scope of our apostolate, which makes Christ's redeeming love manifest.

13. So for us, work is not only the natural means of providing for our financial needs and maintaining a natural, simple community of life with others. But it is also – and especially – the specific means of personal sanctification which our Father God has shown us, and the great, sanctifying apostolic instrument which God has placed in our hands, so that the order willed by him may shine forth in the whole of creation.

Work, which must accompany man's life on earth,<sup>[22]</sup> is for us at the same time (and to the highest degree, because in addition to the natural demands, there are others of a clearly supernatural order) the meeting-point of our will with the saving will of our heavenly Father.

I will tell you once again, my children: the Lord has called us so that, each remaining in our own state of life and in the exercise of our own profession or trade, we may all sanctify ourselves in our work, sanctify our work, and sanctify others through our work. This is how the human work we do can rightly be considered *opus Dei, operatio Dei*, work of God.

Our Lord bestows an immense value on his children's intellectual and manual work. When everything is done in God's presence, inspired by motives of love and service, with a priestly soul, then all a person's actions acquire a deeply spiritual meaning, uniting our life to the source of all grace.

It is not about making the supernatural mission of Christ and his Church into something temporal; see how far all this is from a "clerical" spirit! It is quite the opposite: it is about supernaturalising people's temporal activities. For we are fully convinced that all legitimate human work, however humble, small and insignificant it may seem, can always have a transcendent meaning: a reason of

love, something that speaks of God and leads to God.

**14.** We have to show people this simple path to holiness, which is offered to everyone with the magnificent simplicity of divine realities. And we will do so effectively, if we try to begin preaching this doctrine through the living example of our own intense work, done with a desire for perfection – with the greatest human perfection possible, with the perfection required by what is to be offered to God.

If we practise our own profession in this way, if we carry out our own tasks in the middle of the world – the work or *munus* we each have, which is well known to all – people will learn from us that it is quite possible, in the normal circumstances of ordinary life, to fulfil in their souls the command which the Lord addressed to everyone: *estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut et Pater vester caelestis perfectus est* (Matt 5:48); be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Fulfilling God's will in our work, contemplating God in our work, working for love of God and our neighbour, making our work into a means of apostolate, giving divine value to human things: this is the simple, strong unity of life we must have, and must teach others.

**15.** Contemplative souls in the middle of the world: that is what my children in Opus Dei are. That is what we must always be, to assure our perseverance and fidelity to the vocation we have received. Then, at every instant of our day, we will be able to say sincerely: *Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus* (1 Sam 3:9); speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

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 shall 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; just as other souls, with different vocations, find contemplation easier after leaving the world, opting for the *contemptus mundi* and the silence of the cell or the desert. My children, God asks of us only interior silence, the quieting of the selfish voice of the old man, not the silencing of the world. The world cannot, and should not, be silent for us.

**16.** Without this faithful relationship with our Father God, to which we are called by our very vocation, I can assure you that it is very difficult to persevere in Opus Dei. That is why, *whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ* (Col 3:23-24).

With this unity of life, with this urge for contemplation in the middle of the world – in the middle of the street, in the open air, in the sun and the rain – not only will you be driven by a desire to keep working at your temporal task and not distance yourselves from earthly realities, but you will be spurred on by your apostolic zeal to enter all those secular realities courageously, in order to reveal the divine demands that they contain. You will teach others that the fraternity of God's

children is the great solution on offer for the world's problems, because human fraternity has a supernatural meaning. You will draw people out of the shell of their selfishness. At the same time, to those who seem somehow lost in the crowd, you will guarantee the personality and true freedom that they need: *qua libertate Christus nos liberavit.*<sup>[23]</sup> In short, you will open up the divine paths of the earth to all men and women.

17. As you see, my dearest daughters and sons, when we consider these things, which are characteristic of our spirit, within the overall setting of our divine filiation, it opens up broad horizons for our apostolate.

You should be very grateful to God for having given us this spirituality, which is simply and sincerely supernatural, at the same time so human, so close to noble earthly tasks. It is a very special grace – God's light, as I said – which we have received through his mercy, and which we must pass on to many other souls in humble fidelity.

But bear in mind that this spirituality and asceticism have often meant, and mean, that your Father and some of your brothers have had to endure incomprehension, and to hear one of God's pathways branded as madness and even heresy, and those who follow it labelled madmen and heretics.

18. The Lord frequently permits misunderstandings, and even defamation and persecutions, to follow the works of God, just as darkness follows light. These things are brought about by people who are good but blind, who don't want to hear of anything except their own routine, comfort or selfishness, and who shy away from everything that could complicate their lives.

And so, even in ecclesiastical spheres, among so many holy people, or at least, among those who do their duty, there are many others who have no zeal, who act as bureaucrats in God's Church and give the impression that they do not care about souls. They do not understand spiritual terms; when they hear them, such terms seem empty to them; they have not tried to live by them.

I have sometimes thought that, no matter how little training they may have, they should realise that they have a serious duty to ask for information, to listen to the person being accused, to study his teaching – the teaching proposed by the accused, and the fruits that it bears.

I am silent, and will keep silent as long as I can. But I feel clearly that defending the spirit of the Work means defending our friendship with God, who says to us, *ergo iam non estis hospites et advenae, sed estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei* (Eph 2:19); you are no longer strangers and aliens to me, but are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of God's household.

19. With their blindness or comfortable attitude, they cannot understand that freedom, personal freedom, is the main point of the spirit of the Work of God. They cannot understand that most of the time we use the pronoun "I", taking responsibility for our own actions, and that we rarely say "we", because our other brothers and sisters – or rather the other members of the Work – are not obliged to follow the particular criterion that one member of Opus Dei may have in

temporal matters, nor in theological matters which the Church leaves open to discussion. It is comforting to read in the Holy Gospel that *neque enim fratres eius credebant in eum*,<sup>[24]</sup> no one believed in Jesus Christ.

There are other people who look at us with prejudice, wanting to weigh in on us with their long years of experience. I think – and you with me – that both what is old and what is new can be full of vitality: children, young people, and those who have entered maturity or old age, can be healthy, equally healthy, in body and soul. But these people’s old age leads them to give us advice (which we did not ask for) with the “prejudice” and the “prudence” of what is old, when what we need is prayers, understanding and affection.

**20.** All of this will pass. In the meantime, let us fight in our interior life, in an ascetical struggle that fills us with joy and optimism, with peace and hope. And let us repeat the words that I used as an aspiration in the first years of our Work. It was a prayer, if you like, that was somewhat naïve, but it is the one we find in St John: the disciples tell the Master, *nunc scimus quia scis omnia*.<sup>[25]</sup>

Now I continue to say that prayer: “God knows best.” My children, *eratis enim aliquando tenebrae, nunc autem lux in Domino: ut filii lucis ambulate* (Eph 5:8); we were once darkness, now we are light in the Lord: let us go forth as children of light.

When faced with obstacles, we will hear Jesus saying to Paul, and in Paul to us: *sufficit tibi gratia mea, nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur* (2 Cor 12:9); my grace is sufficient for you, for my power shines forth and achieves its end through your weaknesses.

To those who denigrate us, you can say confidently, humbly and with fortitude the last words of Tertullian’s *Apologeticum*: “Such is the contradiction between divine and human works, that when you condemn us, God absolves us.”<sup>[26]</sup>

**21.** However, this “newness” of ours, my children, is as old as the Gospel. From the moment when Jesus Christ said that he was *the Way, and the Truth and the Life* (John 14:6), and invited everyone to follow him,<sup>[27]</sup> right from the earliest times of the Church’s life, there burst forth in the souls of many faithful the desire to undertake the search for perfection which was outlined in the Gospel and practised by Christ himself as our model: a life of personal holiness and apostolic action.

And so the genuine spirituality of the Gospel started to produce abundant fruits of holiness in every sphere of the pagan society in which the early Christians lived. They were men and women who practised their faith sincerely, and as a result brought new members into the Church. They worked quite naturally alongside everyone else, as citizens if they were citizens, and as slaves if they were slaves. They practised fraternity to an exquisite degree and dedicated themselves to God and to the spreading of the Good News, in the measure of the gifts they had each received.<sup>[28]</sup> The result was that the whole of pagan society was Christianised.

**22.** Since then, down through the centuries, there has been no lack of souls who have sought to follow the example of Jesus Christ closely. But, progressively, they

concentrated their efforts on following and publicly professing three counsels, which became traditional: poverty, chastity and obedience. These then became typified as the ascetical pillars of a particular state of life, distinct from that of the simple faithful.

In this way the religious state as such was delineated, which, in the various forms of its historical development, has always required, as a substantial element, some degree of separation from the world, from secular tasks and activities.

For souls who receive this vocation from God, the temporal occupations and deeds of a simple Christian are an impediment that must be abandoned as an indispensable condition for seeking their own sanctification by living the “life of evangelical perfection”, and working for other people’s salvation from outside the world, by prayer, penance and works of apostolate compatible with this state of life.

**23.** This does not mean that there have not also been souls who have tried to dedicate themselves to fulfilling God’s will perfectly without leaving their ordinary occupations or their situation in the world. There have been such people, though usually acting in isolation, and the Church has raised some of them to the altars.

The great majority of these souls, however, have remained unnoticed, in obscurity and silence, and so it is hard to know how much their holy lives have been an example for others and have helped to manifest the holiness of the Church.

Together with the example of these special people, semi-obscurity has also enveloped – at least in practice – the clear doctrine that all the baptised, even when they continue their normal life of work in the middle of the world, can and ought to become holy, and be a powerful leaven of Christian life.<sup>[29]</sup>

**24.** There are generous souls, men and women, who feel the desire to work with all their strength in the Lord’s vineyard. They do not, however, have a religious vocation, nor do they desire the “life of evangelical perfection”, but they want to fulfil their desire *to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of Christian perfection and to doing apostolate*, right in the middle of the world and in ordinary life.

These people who hunger for perfection know that there are plenty of spheres that also belong to God, but whose boundaries a priest or a religious, by the nature of their vocation, cannot cross. The progressive de-Christianisation of modern society offers eloquent proof that human life, professions and social activities are often far removed from the Church and from the tasks that belong properly to people formally consecrated to her service.

**25.** Well then, my daughters and sons, as part of God’s providence in caring for his holy Church and keeping the spirit of the Gospel alive, Our Lord has entrusted Opus Dei, since 2 October 1928, with the task of making it clear, of reminding all souls, by the example of your life and your words, that there is a universal call to Christian perfection and that it is possible to follow it.

God wants each of you to try to be holy in your own specific circumstances and position in life: *Haec est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra (1 Thess 4:3)*; this is

God's will, your sanctification. This is a sanctity that will often be hidden, without any outward show; everyday, heroic sanctity, so as to co-redeem with Christ, to save souls with him, to put order into all human affairs with him.

God wishes to make use of your personal holiness, which you seek in accordance with the spirit of the Work, to teach everyone, in a simple, specific way, something that you know very well: that all the faithful, incorporated into Christ by baptism, are called to seek the fullness of Christian life.

**26.** Our Lord wants us to be his instruments to remind people in a practical way – firstly by the way we live – that the call to holiness really is universal, and not restricted to just a few people, or to a particular state in life; nor is it generally conditional on abandoning the world. Any job, any profession, can be a path to holiness and a means for apostolate.

This, my children, is reliable doctrine, a light from God. It is a teaching which can be understood only with difficulty by those who cannot conceive of Christian perfection and contemplation outside the religious state; but which is based on Sacred Scripture and on the Church's Tradition, and constantly confirmed by our lived experience in Opus Dei, despite our human shortcomings.

**27.** The Work has an exclusively supernatural aim. That is why the personal freedom of each of its members is part of its spirit; and that is also why we do not exclude from our work anyone, any soul who wishes to come and share our endeavours, even if they do not share our faith.

As you well know, no absolutism is possible within our spiritual family; every precaution is taken to avoid that danger, by making our governance collegial. However, within Opus Dei, in the fundamentals, there will be no splitting into factions, there will be no "opinions" of any kind; we are *consummati in unum* (John 17:23). We have a small common denominator, which is the teaching of the Church and, within it, the spirit that characterises the Work and our specific way of doing apostolate in the middle of the world, seeking our own sanctity and that of everyone around us. There is also a very broad numerator, a sea without shores, always in keeping with the time and the place, in which differing opinions are and always will be a proof of good spirit, as a clear sign that in Opus Dei there are neither tyrants nor slaves.

The Lord has given us the light to understand something which is clear from the history of mankind: a man who has been enslaved generally becomes a despot afterwards. However, in the Work, there is order. There has to be order; if not, our Opus Dei could not be an instrument for serving souls, serving the Church, or being faithful to the Pope's Magisterium.

But this order, lived with extreme, voluntary docility and freedom, is – I think you will understand me – *unorganised organisation*. That is why, I repeat, in temporal and theological matters which are not defined as being of faith, different opinions are admitted and respected, as a healthy manifestation of a good spirit.

**28.** The Work has three other characteristics: joy, love for work and love for poverty. We shall give God the best. We shall put so much effort and attention



into caring for divine worship (which we normally hold in small oratories) that it will be impossible for us ever to offer him the sacrifice of Cain. As I have told you before, only when a man gives the woman he loves a sack of cement and three iron bars as a sign of his affection will we do the same to Our Lord, who is in heaven and in our tabernacles.

My children, our poverty should not be a kind of ostentatious destitution. It is always hidden behind a smile, our personal cleanliness, the cleanliness of our clothes, and above all, the cleanliness of our soul. Hence we do not expect any praise in this life; but we never forget the words of St Matthew: *Pater tuus, qui videt in abscondito, reddet tibi.*<sup>[30]</sup>

That is why we must always do what is natural, in man, with a supernatural sense. That is why we will be able to make the things of the earth divine. That is why it is not a sacrifice for us to accept our vocation: it is not a sacrifice, because we know that it is a proof of a choice and of love: *redemi te, et vocavi te nomine tuo, meus es tu.*<sup>[31]</sup>

29. Thus what the psalmist says of the Lord, our Redeemer and our Model, can also be said of us: *exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam*, even though we are so small, *a summo caelo egressio eius et occursus eius usque ad summum eius*; we will rejoice like a giant who runs his course and goes from one end to the other, who flows into heaven, reaching to the farthest boundaries; *nec est qui se abscondat a calore eius*,<sup>[32]</sup> there is none who can hide, and all receive warmth.

When we see the marvels that God is already beginning to work through our hands in so many people who draw close to us, we will not be tempted to become proud. For in the depths of our heart there will resound the verse from the psalms: *Tu es, Deus, qui facis mirabilia: notam fecisti in populis virtutem tuam* (Ps 77[76]:14); you alone, Lord, are the one who carries out marvellous deeds, and thus you make known your power to all peoples.

Therefore, *nolite itaque errare, fratres mei dilectissimi: omne datum optimum, et omne donum perfectum, desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum, apud quem non est transmutatio nec vicissitudinis obumbratio* (Jas 1:16-17);<sup>[33]</sup> you well know that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, descending from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

30. When you live by all of this doctrine, there will be times when you find that words are just not enough: you'll want to break into song, like the young men who go and sing love-songs to their sweethearts. But you and I will sing human love-songs to God's love, and you will feel like the living creatures Ezekiel described, representing Our Lord's Evangelists: *ibant et revertabantur in similitudinem fulguris coruscantis*,<sup>[34]</sup> you will go through the world giving off light, like burning torches throwing out fiery sparks.

The Holy Spirit ensures that our Mother, the Church of Jesus Christ, is a living and ever up-to-date reality that is both modern and ancient; that she always finds, in faithfulness to the rich, well-guarded deposit entrusted to her, the strength she needs to renew her youthfulness and to pass the Christian message on to all souls in accordance with the times, adapting it to people's language, and understanding

their mentality. As we read in the Song of Songs, *nova et vetera, dilecte mi, servavi tibi* (Song 7:13); I have stored up for you, my beloved, things both new and old.

And in the Gospel it is written that *omnis scriba doctus in regno caelorum similis est homini patrifamilias, qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera* (Matt 13:52); every man instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth from his store room things new and old.

**31.** Our spirit is like that, as I have always written to you: as old as the Gospel, and, like the Gospel, new. The very nature of our vocation, our way of seeking sanctity and working for the Kingdom of God, makes us speak of divine things in the same language as other people use, to have the same healthy social customs as they have, and to share the same honest mentality. It makes us see God, I would say, from the same secular and lay perspective from which they approach, or can approach, life's transcendental problems: never being an icy model, that can be admired, but not loved.

We come, then, in a youthful spirit, to reap the Gospel's treasures, so as to take them to all the corners of the earth. But we do not come to *revolutionise* anything. We drink the good, well-aged wine of authentic Catholic doctrine, respecting and loving everything God has inspired in the service of his Holy Church down through the centuries.

**32.** *Spiritus ubi vult spirat, et vocem eius audis, sed nescis unde veniat aut quo vadat* (John 3:8); the Spirit blows where he wills, and you hear his voice but you do not know where he comes from or where he goes. This has been my life – I write this with emotion and gratitude towards my God, knowing that I am a poor sinner – for many years: long before God, pouring forth his abundant grace – I was alone then, having nothing but my twenty-six years and my good humour – called me clearly to labour in his Work with a well-defined vocation.

The Work is going ahead on the basis of prayer: my own prayer (and my faults and failings) which in God's eyes is the force that brings about what is required to fulfil his Will; and the prayer of so many souls, priests and lay people, young and old, healthy and sick, to whom I turn for help, certain that God hears them. I ask them to pray for a particular intention which at first only I knew about. And together with prayer, there was the mortification and work of those who join me. These have been and are our only weapons for the battle, and they are powerful ones.

This is how the Work is being done and will continue to be done, growing in every environment: in hospitals and universities; in catechetical work in the poorest districts; in family homes and wherever people gather together; among the poor, the wealthy, and people from every kind of background, so that the message God has entrusted to us may reach everyone.

**33.** That is the mission that the Work has set out to fulfil directly, generously, sincerely, without subterfuge or human patronage; without, for example, continually leaping around in search of the warmest sun or the richest and most attractive flower. The sun is within us, and the apostolate is carried out, as it should be, in the open, and is addressed to all.

In these years of beginnings, I am filled with deep gratitude to God. And at the same time, my children, I think of how much ground remains to be covered until the Catholic and universal seed which the Work has come to scatter is sown in all nations, throughout the world, in all spheres of human activity.

That is why I continue to rely on everyone's prayer, mortification, daily work and cheerfulness, while at the same time constantly renewing my trust in the Lord: *universi, qui sustinent te, non confundentur* (Ps 25[24]:3): none of those who place their hope in God will be confounded.

**34.** My children, I ask you to unite yourselves always, continually, to my intentions, filled with trust too, as you prepare to continue labouring with renewed youthfulness to spread the Work: *qui replet in bonis desiderium tuum, renovabitur ut aquilae iuventus tua*;<sup>[35]</sup> for our God will make fruitful the desires he has placed in our hearts, and our spiritual task on earth will always be robust and youthful.

God expects you and me, joyously grateful for the vocation which in his infinite goodness he has placed in our soul, to be a great army of sowers of peace and joy along the pathways of mankind, so that countless souls can soon join us in exclaiming: *Cantate Domino canticum novum; cantate Domino omnis terra* (Ps 96[95]:1), sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!

As I have already told you, we children of God in his Work, by sincerely feeling and living out our divine filiation, united by the strong bonds of fraternal love, can easily be an apostolic *organised disorganisation* in the world, a continuous transfusion of the Christian life-force into the bloodstream of society.

**35.** God wants you, whether individually through your personal apostolate, or together with other people, who may be separated from God, or who may be non-Catholics or non-Christians, to plan and carry out in the world all kinds of serene, beautiful projects, as varied as the face of the earth, as diverse as the feelings and desires of those who inhabit it. They will contribute to the spiritual and material well-being of society, and will offer everyone an opportunity to meet Christ, an opportunity for holiness.

In any case, the great means that you have at your disposal to enable you to carry out both of those forms of apostolate – individual, or working together with other citizens – is your professional work. That is why I have so often told you that your professional vocation is an important part of your divine vocation. That is also why the Work's apostolate in the world will always be up to date, contemporary, and necessary. For as long as there are people on earth, there will be men and women who work, with a specific profession or occupation, whether intellectual or manual. And they are all called to sanctify that work, to sanctify themselves in it, and to lead others to a simple, trusting relationship with God.

Your work, your apostolate – which must necessarily be very proselytistic,<sup>[36]</sup> like that of the early Christians – will attract people who want to work, who are vigorous, spirited, and resolute; who are constant rather than brilliant; who are daring and sincere; who love freedom, and are therefore capable of embracing our dedication; people who can be Opus Dei in their life and work. And all this,

even though, because of the pagan surroundings they have grown up in, they may never have suspected that they can be happy in God's friendship and lead a life of *dedication* and service.

**36.** The paths of divine mercy are numerous, as you well know from personal experience. People of all nations, races and languages, young and old, single and married, healthy and sick, should come to the Work, each taking the place assigned to them by God's Will, each taking the opportunity – the very special grace – offered them by Our Lord's goodness.

Thinking of this path that savours of early Christianity, which God has raised up in order to renew the miracles of grace in the lives of so many souls in such an admirably simple way, I rejoice to reread slowly what St Justin wrote, marvelling, like him, at the astonishing power of the Gospel.

“We who once indulged in fornication,” he says, “now embrace chastity alone. We who used magic arts, are now consecrated to the good and unbegotten God. We who loved above all else to acquire money and possessions, now put in common even what we have, and share it with those who need it. We who hated and wounded one another, and, separated by different ways of life, would not share our homes with people of a different race, now, after the coming of Christ, all live together, and pray for our enemies, and try to persuade those who hate us unjustly, so that, by living according to the beautiful precepts of Christ, they too may have good hope of attaining, together with us, the same reward that we hope for from God the ruler of all.”<sup>[37]</sup>

**37.** Anyone can be a member of the Work, if God calls them; their vocation entails no change of state, and consequently, no exterior change. Each person remains in their own place in the world with their own work, their own mentality, the duties of their own state in life, their professional commitments, their duties toward society, and their social relations; because all these relationships are means for their apostolic work as Christians.

The Work of God will give each person its particular supernatural spirit – its specific asceticism – and the necessary doctrinal formation, so that they can sanctify themselves and do *Opus Dei* precisely *in and through* those same human realities.

But, within this necessary unity of spirit and formation, each member of the Work acts in the world – in their temporal, professional, cultural, political, social and other activities – with full freedom and, therefore, with personal responsibility: a complete and exclusive responsibility, which they each assume as a natural consequence of their absolute freedom of opinion and action, within the limits of the faith and morals of Jesus Christ.

**38.** The theological and apostolic fact of the Work is therefore so special, and so different from the birth of a religious vocation and the condition of life which that vocation brings with it, that surely no one wishing to join *Opus Dei* would previously have thought of giving themselves to God in the religious state or of entering a seminary. We can truly say, therefore, that we do not draw anyone away from any of those other paths.

The Work does not have, nor should it have (although we love them for others) minor seminaries or apostolic schools, where mothers, full of good desires – holy desires – take their sons from a very early age, to see whether, through living in a particularly suitable environment, the priestly or religious vocation can take root in them.

Those who ask to be admitted to the Work do so in the clear knowledge – since by that time they are more than old enough – of the personal dedication that the call to Opus Dei implies, and of the special apostolic mission that they are to carry out.

They ask to be admitted after maturing their decision slowly and freely; they make the decision in conscience, exercising their responsibility and knowing that they are free to decide either way, having understood the duties that they acquire by accepting God's specific call to his Work.

**39.** No one is more concerned than we are to see that the only people who come to Opus Dei are those who truly have this specific divine vocation, and who want to give themselves and persevere in full freedom; for that is the best guarantee that, with the help of God's grace, they will be effective.

At the same time, you well know that it is very much part of our spirit to rejoice when we see that many vocations arise for seminaries and religious orders. Moreover, we thank God that not a few of these vocations arise as the fruit of the spiritual and doctrinal formation which we give young people. By enkindling the atmosphere around us with a Christian spirit, by making it more supernatural and more apostolic, we naturally stimulate a greater number of vocations for all the institutions in the Church.

**40.** We proceed in this way with special care when it is a question of vocations to the religious state. From the first moment of the foundation of Opus Dei, I have seen the Work as an institution whose members cannot be religious, nor live *ad instar religiosorum* – in the manner of religious – nor be equated with religious in any way.

And this is not because of any lack of affection for religious, whom I love and venerate with all my heart; so much so, my children, that I can repeat with absolute sincerity, referring to these souls, the very words of St Paul to the faithful of Philippi: *testis enim mihi est Deus, quomodo cupiam omnes vos in visceribus Iesu Christi (Phil 1:8)*; God is my witness how much I love you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

We deeply venerate and respect the priestly and religious vocation, and all the immense work that religious have done and will do in the service of the Church. For this reason, anyone who did not have this spirit would not be a good son or daughter of mine.

But at the same time, we repeat that because our call and our apostolate are an invitation to remain in the world, and because our apostolic tasks are carried out *in and from* secular activities, they are totally different from the vocation and apostolate entrusted to religious.

**41.** You have given yourselves to the Lord on the specific condition that you do

not change your state – that you are not religious, nor assimilated to the religious; that you remain in the world, in perfect communion of life and work with the other faithful of the people of God, who are your equals.

The work that we undertake, the mentality and the means with which we carry it out, the circumstances in which we do it, and the specific formation and asceticism that prepare us for that apostolic work, are things that do not exist in the theological and juridical concept of the religious state.

**42.** Our work is also very different from that which is ordinarily done by other lay people in associations or movements of various kinds, promoted more or less directly by the ordinary hierarchy of the Church, or by religious orders or congregations.

These associations or movements do not require full dedication to doing apostolate. The bond between them and their members is weak, almost non-existent, or empty in practice. Their ascetical and doctrinal formation lacks any depth of rigour and continuity; they feel no need to go any deeper, and, from another angle, it cannot be said to be essential for their goals.

But even if they possessed all these things, they would always lack that close, total union between professional and apostolic work, which is a fundamental characteristic of the specific vocation and the specific ascetical demands of the members of the Work; and whose practical consequence is that neither *Opus Dei* nor its members need money from anyone, since they support themselves with their professional work; although on the other hand, what is indispensable to the apostolic undertakings we carry out is the generous cooperation of people, Catholics or not, who strengthen our effectiveness with their prayer, work, or money.

**43.** At this point, I think it is appropriate to talk to you about some of the specific reasons that can explain – though not justify – the position of certain people who perhaps do not try to understand our way, or who appear incapable of understanding it. This will help to clarify, albeit somewhat negatively, certain statements defining our spirituality and apostolate.

There are people who are accustomed to praise what is artificial, to take pleasure in things that are strange or false, and to ignore the beauty of things that are lovely and genuine. They find artificial flowers more beautiful than natural ones; who has not heard it said in *praise* of some fresh, fragrant roses, “They are so pretty, they almost look artificial!” Such people will find it hard to recognise, in apostolic works, the wonderful but simple fruit of God’s grace, of his ordinary providence, and of hard, unselfish human work.

Some people are used to doing apostolate in a spectacular, noisy way, with plenty of fireworks. This mindset, which perhaps carries on for centuries, may have brought about a special attitude, a mentality that prevents them from seeing (it doesn’t require belief, because it’s palpably obvious) that other people don’t use artificial modes or secrecy, but act quite simply and naturally, openly, and hence humbly.

44. In certain specific vocations, there are elements worthy of respect but not essential to the true pursuit of Christian perfection; things like the colours and styles of habits; long, solemn ceremonies; cords, belts, crucifixes on shoulder-straps or hung round the neck, medals on view, etc. These signs are not infrequently used as an instrument of classism, which the Church has lamented on more than one occasion. Superficial types are in the habit of emptying out the legitimate meaning of these things by their lightness and thoughtlessness and, instead, giving them importance for their own sake. Such people will feel moved to doubt the presence of a true path of holiness if they find that any one of those traditional elements is entirely absent.

And in our case, my children, they are all absent. There are not even, nor should there be, any letters to put after our names indicating membership of the Work, simply because we have nothing to do with the religious state: we are ordinary citizens, the same as any other citizens.

If they are ignorant of what is meant by complete *dedication* to serious *professionalwork*, to human sciences, they will never be able to appreciate the scope and extent of the apostolate which God asks of the members of the Work, or the way in which they are to carry it out.

If they are accustomed to use the Church to serve their personal vanity, so that they can rule without restraint and run roughshod over everything, they will in principle be enemies of any apostolate in which their desire to dominate is rightly limited, because they will see it as an attack on their authority and perhaps also on their financial interests.

45. Nor can we be surprised, my children, although we may be sorry, when we see that there are other people who unwittingly play up to those I have just described. They let themselves be led by catchphrases (which should be abolished, because they limit and condition the Church's divine action and vitality) and by prejudices born of error and a lack of doctrine.

These other people I am now talking about, even though they are honourable, cannot see the rectitude and legitimacy of the panorama of noble aspirations opened up before their eyes by the Work. Even though they are good, they cannot hold firm against the never-ending stream of one-sided or false information poured out by apparently respectable people. Even though they are incapable of doing wrong, they don't do what is right, for fear of the powerful. Even though they are intelligent and even learned, they can't see the effectiveness of the service to God and his Church that is being done in their presence, not the theological doctrine underpinning it, nor the canonical rules that it needs.

46. All this, my daughters and sons, doesn't matter. I have paused to speak about these difficulties only because considering them helps us, by contrast, to define the characteristics of our spirit more clearly. For the rest, pray with filial trust in our Father God, forgive everyone, and wait.

When heaven judges that the time has come, it will cause us to open up, within the Church's organised apostolate, the channel along which the Work, that great river, should flow, though at present it does not yet have any suitable place to

settle in. It will be an arduous, painful, hard task. Many obstacles will have to be overcome, but the Lord will help us, for everything in his Work is his Will.

Pray. Live in union with my continual prayer: *Domine, Deus salutis meae: inclina aurem tuam ad precem meam* (Ps 88[87]:2-3). Say with me: Lord God our Saviour, hear our prayer. Never lack the deep conviction that the waters will pass through the mountains: *inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae* (Ps 104[103]:10). These are divine words: the waters will pass through.

In the meantime, make a resolution to put into practice, as I did, the invitation I recently received anew in Burjasot, during a few days of preaching to a group of university students – some of you are already my children – who were preparing to improve their Christian life. Over a door, I was happy to re-read the inscription: “Let each wayfarer follow his own path.” This is what we have to do, to strive ever more earnestly to learn all about the specific path to which God our Lord has brought us, and to follow it faithfully.

47. When we grow in knowledge of our vocation, and consider the value and potential of our specific way of bringing the gospel message to mankind, it becomes clear, my daughters and sons, that by being what it is and working in the way it does, the whole Work is like one great catechesis, carried out in a lively, simple, direct way at the very heart of civil society.

Truly, this doctrinal apostolate is sorely needed, even in social groups and countries with a long-standing Christian tradition, because religious ignorance is growing day by day. It could well be said that God’s greatest enemy is ignorance, since we can love God only when we know him. Ignorance is the origin of many evils and a great obstacle to the salvation of souls.

What Scripture tells us – *No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit* (Acts 19:2) – is a still living picture of the lack of clear doctrine in the minds of many people, many Christians; of unlearned people, and of others who are reputed to be learned in the human sciences; of men of standing in their profession, or government posts.

And with ignorance comes confusion, nurtured by all the spoken and written media, which act so rapidly; by enemies of the Church or by imprudent people, through projects, expressions and customs that look harmless, but which contain or lead to error.

48. Just as aid given to those who are sick or poor is material alms, so aid given to those who are poor in doctrine is also alms: alms, spiritual charity, which we must distribute in the right way, generously, with full hands.

We must teach doctrine in order to drown evil in an abundance of good. Truth cannot be a luxury item. We must sow good doctrine, sure doctrine, abundantly among the faithful, being convinced that what is proposed by the Magisterium as a truth of faith will remain unshakeable, and allowing and teaching freedom on what is a matter of opinion.

Sow, my children, clearly, unambiguously. We cannot allow practical scepticism to prevail: the truth is one. Joyfully recalling the descent of the Holy Spirit,<sup>[38]</sup> I like



to say that we must sow with the “gift of tongues”, which means always adjusting what we say to our hearers’ backgrounds, capacity and formation. The gift is the result of the speakers’ preparation, and the love and faith they bring to their apostolic task.<sup>[39]</sup>

**49.** In response to your constant desire to improve your formation, and your eagerness to learn, the Work offers you, to the extent and in the way that best matches your personal circumstances, accurate knowledge of the Church’s dogmatic and moral teaching, Sacred Scripture and liturgy, Church law and history. This will help you to raise human spheres of knowledge to the supernatural order and make them into apostolic instruments.

But you must also acquire the appropriate professional training for your own occupation, your intellectual or manual job in society, in order to be able to carry out this apostolate of doctrine effectively through your personal activities, your ordinary work.

Work cannot really be sanctified unless it is done perfectly, including on the human plane. And without this perfection, we will find it hard, if not impossible, to acquire the professional standing and respect needed for teaching others to sanctify their work and to change their lives to live up to the demands of the Christian faith.

**50.** Therefore we must apply all the necessary means to acquire good professional training, and to ensure that it is kept up to date. We have the same rights and the same possibilities as any other citizens. We go to the public or private educational centres that offer the best guarantees of providing good education and training, whether for intellectual work or for the exercise of a manual trade.

If someone can be learned, we do not excuse them for not being. But all of you do not need to be learned. On the other hand you must all be well trained, competent in your professional work, with a good reputation among your colleagues for integrity, learning and skill.

**51.** *Coepit facere et docere* (Acts 1:1), Jesus began to do and to teach. My children, you must teach by your example. People will believe your doctrine when they see your good deeds,<sup>[40]</sup> the way you act. Good example is always compelling. But in order to be effective, it must be the result of the simple, natural way that you, members of the Work, practise what you teach.

It is a statement made by ordinary Christians in the upright, responsible practice of their profession or job, in the faithful fulfilment of all their civic duties, in the exercise of all their rights, which are also duties, in the way they face up to and resolve the daily problems and toils of life in the world. In short, through all human relationships, inspired by Christian faith and lived out in a Christian way, for a supernatural reason: love for God and for one’s neighbour.

Since that is the kind of example members of the Work should set, it may well be that from a distance you don’t attract attention. But when people draw near and get to know you, they will soon be able to say, “Christ is here.” For they will feel stirred by the *Christi bonus odor*,<sup>[41]</sup> the fragrance of a soul continually speaking to

God.

52. Each of the members of Opus Dei, right where we are, in our workplace, in all sincerity, without subterfuge or tactics, must give the Christian light that people and the world around are expecting, since we are for the world and for the people.

Our gestures, our way of speaking, our way of seeing and doing things, our interactions with others and, in general, our whole life and behaviour as members of the Work, should be accompanied by the simplicity that flows from our being the same as other people. If they were ever to think, mistakenly, that we were not like them, the world and the people around us would become impenetrable to us: we would not be able to serve souls.

53. This is how the Church will be truly and simply present in all human endeavours: through the personal witness of her daughters and sons, ordinary lay people – not imitating or behaving like friars – who make the presence of the Christian message alive and active.

This apostolate of example is done, with a lay mentality, by people who live by their work, and who do not, therefore, place any financial burden on the Church, which they serve generously, without expecting or any kind of human payment or reward.

You have to live, and go about your work, honestly and unselfishly, as befits people who rely on the fact of being citizens and good professionals, and not on being Catholics or having recourse to saints' names or the adjective "Catholic". You have to act with the supernatural joy and human optimism of people who are deeply convinced that Christianity is not a negative, side-lined religion. It is a joyful, positive statement in every corner of the world. It possesses the only teaching capable of providing a firm foundation for all the noble ways of living on earth, and a sure basis for their progress.

54. Such frank, effective disinterestedness is made possible, nourished, by our constant conversation with our Father God, our trusting devotion to Our Lady, our love for the Church and the Pope, and our prayer and mortification. Relying on this, you must try and make friends with your colleagues and the people you are in touch with for any reason.

You will certainly not do so, my daughters and sons, in order to use friendship as a tactic for social penetration: that would rob friendship of its intrinsic value. Rather, friendship is a requirement – the first and most immediate one – of human fraternity, which we Christians are obliged to foster among our fellow-men, no matter how different they may be from one another.

And at the same time, we act out of love for God. For friendship gives people the confidence to open up, and thus makes the doctrinal apostolate possible, enabling us to bring the people around us, our friends whose good we desire, closer to Our Lord.

55. There will even be those who, like Nicodemus going to Jesus by night,<sup>[42]</sup> will seek in that discreet, straightforward friendship, hidden from the indiscreet and

curious, a way to overcome human respects and seek the divine truth which they long for in their hearts.

It can truly be said, my dearest children, that the greatest fruit of Opus Dei's apostolate is that which its members obtain *personally* through the apostolate of their example and their loyal friendship with their colleagues in the university or the factory, the office, the mine or the fields.

It is a work of giving light, helping people with our own good example, and teaching doctrine. It is a constant, humble, silent, but most effective work, whose fruits cannot easily be reflected in statistics.

**56.** This apostolic work is so human that to those who do not understand the supernatural nature of our divine call, so closely linked to our professional work, or to those who think that total self-dedication to God means ceasing to be ordinary people, it could give the impression that the members of the Work are strange, precisely because they are not strange: because they are so normal, so much the same in every way as their fellow citizens, fellow-workers in their trade or profession.

Members of the Work live, dress and behave in accordance with the position they each hold in society by reason of their work. Naturally, like other citizens, they obey the just demands of their surroundings and adapt to their circumstances, being simple and open in all that they do. In other words, they behave outwardly like any other Christian, just as they would if they did not belong to the Work.

**57.** It is not a question, therefore, of concealing their own personality or state in life; nor of maintaining a particular appearance, other than their true, natural one; nor of acting in a certain way for apostolic purposes; nor of adopting unnecessary camouflage.

All such strange behaviour or hypocrisy is impossible in the Work. It could be employed by people who try to disguise themselves as secular, or aim to look as though they were not religious, "secularizing" themselves, as I have seen some do, perhaps as an apostolic tactic. It would be a dangerous tactic, which could lead (since sincerity always claims its rights) to actual apostasy from the religious state, brought about by techniques that pervert both intellect and behaviour.

**58.** *Bless God and acknowledge him before all the living with respect to the good things he has done for you. Bless and sing hymns to his name. Report the words of God to all people honourably, and do not hesitate to acknowledge him. It is an honourable thing to keep a king's secret hidden, and gloriously to reveal and acknowledge the works of God (Tob 12:6-7).* My daughters and sons, we have nothing to hide or cover up. Nobody could misinterpret the spontaneity of our conduct and behaviour as secrecy.

I have never had secrets. I don't have any now, nor will I ever have. Nor does the Work. It would be wrong for it to have secrets when I, the Founder, don't know about them. Secrecy is unnecessary for Opus Dei. The Work has never needed it in the past, it does not need it now, and it will never need it. The treasure God has entrusted to us, the light we have to spread, is an *open secret*. We have the duty,

the divine mission, to proclaim it to the four winds.

**59.** But do not forget that this simple and natural way of living our vocation is perfectly complemented by sensible supernatural discretion, which is required by the effectiveness of the apostolate and, above all, personal humility and collective humility; especially now, in these early days of the Work, which is the delicate time of gestation.

The intimacy of our personal dedication to God and the intimate details of the life of our Family are not things to be trumpeted to the winds. They are not there to satisfy the curiosity of the first aggressive busybody who knocks at our door. Our openness must go hand in hand with prudence.

**60.** My children, meditate on St Paul's clear, wonderful words: *Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we have behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity (...) by the grace of God, (2 Cor 1:12)*. This is the Work's glory. And this is how we must each strive to live in every situation and personal circumstance.

The simplicity and sincere naturalness of our spirit will shine brightly in the world before men, if you strive for childlike simplicity and sincerity in your conversation with God, and if you continually try to ensure that your thoughts, words and deeds are in accord with the Truth.

**61.** Be sincere and simple also toward those in the Work who have the mission of directing and forming you, so that they can guide and help you affectionately, firmly, understandingly and effectively. Be sincere in a well-mannered way, but be *brutally sincere*.

Don't be afraid to say everything that will help people to provide spiritual guidance, because this will bring you to God, improve your spirit and formation, quickly heal any wound, and in time straighten out any deviation, no matter how serious it may be or seem. Never forget that the only truly serious thing would be to hide a wound or deviation from the person who is physician, guide and shepherd.

Be sincere, finally, in our *family life*. Spontaneous, open behaviour is a very effective way of making your mutual relations cordial and friendly; it also makes it easier for you to help one another at all times, with fraternal correction as well when necessary.

**62.** Because the Work's apostolate is full of real fraternity, it must tend to foster mutual understanding and so create around us an atmosphere of peace and serene co-existence. This will remove the possible obstacles – there are still so many of them! – to people's unity with one another and with God our Lord.

Therefore, anything which limits the Christian view of the world, people or things, or reduces it out of parochialism or selfishness, is alien to the spirit of the Work. We identify with St Paul's teaching to the Corinthians about the unity of the Church, which is a figure of the unity of the whole human race: *in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13)*.

**63.** The truly catholic spirit of Opus Dei means that we need to be open-minded, universal, able to draw many good things from our heart's store – *de bono thesauro profert bona*<sup>[43]</sup> – in order to overcome and remove the many mental and psychological barriers people raise against the fraternity of God's children.

One of those barriers – perhaps the most pernicious at the present time – is nationalism. It makes understanding and getting on with one another difficult. It is incompatible with genuine love for one's own country, and is a big obstacle to the common good of human society.

The worst exaggeration, the most harmful danger, would come if that nationalism were to be mixed up with the things of God, which is where the union of everything and everyone in the love of Jesus Christ should shine the brightest.<sup>[44]</sup>

**64.** The reality of this union in Christian charity must be shown in deeds, in every sphere of human society. There can be no class distinctions, much less castes or sectarianism. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).*

Achieving such unity and making it last is a difficult task. It is nurtured by acts of humility, self-denial and silence, learning how to listen and understand, taking a genuine interest in other people's well-being, forgiving as often as necessary... in a word, by learning how to love, truly, with deeds.

We all have to contribute to this great Christian task by making a determined apostolic effort. We must help all those who approach the Work feel moved to work for unity and mutual understanding, which leads people to live together peacefully, and brings about spiritual and material well-being.

**65.** In the Church and in civil society there are neither second-class faithful nor second-class citizens. In both apostolic and temporal matters, any limitations on the freedom of the children of God, on the freedom of consciences or on legitimate initiatives, are arbitrary and unjust. Such limitations stem from abuse of authority, ignorance or errors on the part of those who think that they have the right to show discrimination.

This is an unjust and unnatural way of proceeding, because it goes against the dignity of the human person. It can never be a way of living amicably together, for it stifles people's right to act according to their conscience, their right to work, to associate with others, and to live in freedom within the limits of natural law.

**66.** My daughters and sons, we are in favour of working peacefully with everyone, precisely because we esteem, respect and defend the enormous value of the dignity and freedom that God has given to rational creatures, from the very moment of Creation; and, even more, since God himself did not hesitate to assume human nature, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.<sup>[45]</sup>

Hence, our concern is to be in contact with everyone. We are not indifferent to anyone, because neither was Jesus. This concern must always be ruled by human sensitivity that goes beyond mere social forms: it is a manifestation of our faith itself.

Thus it may be readily understood that this spirit of the Work has to attract the affection and the help of the very many non-Catholics and even non-Christians among whom you will live and work, and with whom you will make firm friends.

**67.** Let us walk in truth and charity. Our loyal fidelity to the deposit of faith, to the Church's magisterium, will make us bearers of the truth, *veritatem facientes in caritate*,<sup>[46]</sup> teaching the doctrine of the Gospel with Christ's charity.

When it is not possible to make concessions, our intransigence should be holy, and therefore we will be unyielding with respect to doctrine, but not towards people. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to lead them to God, nor would it be easy for us to treat them as our brothers and sisters, as our Christian faith requires. We cannot give way in matters of faith, but let's not forget that there is never any need to mistreat people in order to speak the truth.

If ever, exceptionally, because of the other person's impudence and violence, we have to say things energetically, then to prevent our words from wounding – *irascimini et nolite peccare!* even if we speak harshly, we mustn't get carried away – we should immediately pour the balm of charity on the wounds, treat, and heal them, explaining why we had to act as we did at that particular point.

**68.** Our respect, for every single person and their freedom, should be still greater, if anything, when it comes to disagreements over matters of opinion. Since people tend, unhappily, to cling to their own points of view with so much totalitarianism, tyranny, and fanaticism, we must make a serious effort to set an example everywhere of love for each individual's personal freedom.

This is the way I have always reasoned it out, and you should do the same, and teach others to do as well: If God has left so many things open to people's free discussion, why should I see someone who thinks differently from me as an enemy?

If we don't have the same ideas, and he convinces me, I will accept his opinion; if I convince him, he will think like me; if neither of us convinces the other, we can still respect each other, love each other, and live together in peace.

**69.** *Tribue sermonem compositum in ore meo*,<sup>[47]</sup> put appropriate words on my lips when someone contradicts you. No light comes from violent argument: passion prevents it. That is why we must learn how to listen to the other person and speak serenely, although this may sometimes require an interior effort to overcome ourselves. It is a meritorious mortification, since we act for a supernatural reason that gives it value.

You can be sure that sometimes we think we are completely right, and we are only partly or relatively right. An object that is concave to some is convex to others: it just depends on their standpoint. It is right, therefore, to study other people's reasoning calmly and coolly, and to think about the mindset of the person who is contradicting us.

**70.** By living in friendship with God, which is the first friendship we must cultivate and develop, you will learn to make many true friends.<sup>[48]</sup> The work which God has done and continues to do for us, to keep us in his friendship, is the

same work that he wants to do for many other souls, using us as his instruments.

My children, I have already told you that I believe in human friendship: *amico fidei, nulla est comparatio* (Sir 6:15) – there is nothing comparable to a faithful friend. Friendship is a treasure we must appreciate for its great human value, and must also use as a means to bring souls to God.

I honestly feel that I am a friend to everyone, and you must feel the same way, because we seek the good of all souls without exception. Even though someone is very far from God, even though they may show great animosity, we must think with St Augustine that “we should not despair of their conversion, because even among those who are openly opposed to us, there are some people who are predestined to be our friends, even though they themselves don’t realise it.”<sup>[49]</sup>

71. True friends are not two-faced. *Vir duplex animo inconstans est in omnibus viis suis* (Jas 1:8); a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, but loyal, sincere friendship demands self-renunciation and truthfulness, unselfishly helping and serving each other in lawful things. Friendships are strong and sincere when, with supernatural prudence, people think generously about their friends, at the cost of personal sacrifice.

We expect our friends to respond to the relationship of trust that is set up in a true friendship. We expect them to recognize us for what we are, and, when necessary, to defend us clearly and unambiguously. As I read in a Spanish work some time ago, “When a person defends or praises his friends half-heartedly, he is testifying and proving beyond doubt that he cannot find anything to praise or any grounds for defending them. Because if he could, would he be so little enthusiastic as he is in defending and celebrating them?”

You may say to me that friends sometimes betray you. However, if you always act uprightly and with supernatural sense, you cannot be worried or discouraged by those unexpected disappointments. Nor should such things, which will be the exception to the rule, reduce your effective desire to feel unselfish, clean, affectionate friendship towards everyone.

72. It’s true that it is better to trust in God than in men, *bonum est confidere in Domino, quam confidere in homine* (Ps 118[117]:8). And so I tell you, put your trust in God above all, but also trust your brothers and sisters. By your charity and understanding, by sowing (with due prudence, but with full hands) a sense of security around you, make it difficult, in fact impossible, for people not to feel urged to respond to the open charity with which you treat them.

At the same time, with respect and love we always have for the freedom of consciences, through your apostolate of trust and friendship get involved in people’s lives just as Jesus Christ got involved in ours, and work untiringly to bring new vocations, so that nobody who has a vocation to the Work can excuse themselves like the idle workers in the parable, by saying *quia nemo nos conduxit* (Matt 20:7), because nobody spoke to them.

Think, too, that we have the right and the duty to ensure that all the children whom God has prepared from all eternity come to this wonderful family of ours.

Then it will last for as long as there are people on earth, and Jesus Christ can take possession of the many souls who hunger and thirst for God.<sup>[50]</sup>

73. I am going to finish, my children. I said at the beginning of this letter that I just wanted to remind you about a few aspects of the sincere, simple spirit which the Lord, infinite Goodness, who remedies the littleness of the instruments he uses, has given me for you. Our Father God wants you to learn this spirit thoroughly; he wants us to make it deeply our own, to live by it.

In due course that life, the life of the Work, will open up the necessary channel sanctioned by canon law, which we confidently await. Plants, like Opus Dei, that have to break through the ground, have to open up their own way, with the gentle forcefulness of life, protected by the care and attentiveness of the gardener – and we have a Divine Gardener – who feeds their roots, and ensures that they grow as they should, in the fresh air and sunlight.

74. The very special characteristics of this vocation of ours entail raising many theological, ascetical and canonical problems and finding the right solutions to them, expressed in the right terms. That will necessarily take time and effort, partly because many people, even people with good will and expertise in the various forms of apostolate and the life of the Church, will be slow to understand us, as I have told you before.

But above all it is because this social and apostolic phenomenon that God has set up in the heart of the Church raises problems that are very different, including in the way they are posed, from the problems connected with the religious state. And even when it may seem, to people who do not understand our path, that some questions are common to us and to religious, the solutions are necessarily going to be different.

75. Convinced as we are of the supernatural nature of the Work of God, we need to ensure that its canonical form fully matches the spirit by which we live. We cannot wear someone else's suit; we need a suit made to measure. And this does not imply any desire to be different; it is an essential condition for safeguarding our interior life and our own perseverance, and for the Work's real effectiveness in the service of the Church.

Only like that will we be able to respond generously and faithfully to the specific vocation we have received; only like that will we be able to fulfil the task entrusted to us with ascetical means and apostolic forms that correspond fully to the purposes of our vocation. So I tell each of you, "Wayfarer, there is no path; the path is made by walking."<sup>[51]</sup>

This will also prevent something we are currently suffering from. Some people feel impelled to obstruct our apostolate because they fear that we are "competing" with other apostolic institutions working in the Church, which is a completely unfounded fear. Such people are opposing the freedom we have as God's children, and harming the Church's wonderful unity and variety of apostolates, the manifold riches of the Spirit of the Lord.

76. Heaven is determined, my children, to the Work's being accomplished.



Difficulties on the human plane – think, for example, of the painful experience of three years' civil war in Spain, or the new World War that seems to threaten the Work's expansion to other countries and continents – are things that have never been and never will be able to hinder the vigour and reach of our supernatural apostolic work.

Nor is the absolute poverty in which we live, sometimes lacking the most indispensable human means, a difficulty or obstacle worth considering. Rather, it is a powerful stimulus and spur, because this lack of resources is another clear sign that we are truly following in Christ's footsteps.

Still less should we be slowed up or held back by people's failure to understand our path, because we go at God's pace, and no one can put a brake on a holy, divine impatience to serve the Church and souls.

So increase your faith and confidence in God. And also have a bit of faith and confidence in your Father, who assures you that you are walking in the truth, and obeying Our Lord's will, and not the feeble will of a poor priest *who had no desire*, no thought or intention, of founding anything.

77. Listen to what the Lord makes St Paul say: *Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practise cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

*For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:1-6).*

78. Therefore, my very dearest daughters and sons, pray and be faithful – *multum enim valet deprecatio iusti assidua* (Jas 5:16) – for prayer is worth much, and always has been and must be our great weapon. Work and be joyful, serene and firm, responding fully to your vocation, to the simple, sincere spirit of Opus Dei. *Filii lucis estis et filii diei* (1 Thess 5:5), you are all children of the light and children of the day, and in the bright streets we walk in the radiance of the sun.

When I think of you and your desire for fidelity – and I keep you constantly in mind – I feel the need to tell you in the words of Sacred Scripture, *I am acting with great boldness towards you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy* (2 Cor 7:4).

How good the Lord is! He has sought us out and taught us this holy way of being effective, by surrendering our lives quite simply, loving everyone in God, and sowing peace and joy among men and women. Jesus, how very, very good you are! *Iesu, Iesu, esto mihi semper Iesus!*<sup>[52]</sup>

I pray to God, my children, that this joy and peace, in union with Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and with Holy Mary, our Mother, may be with you always.

Your Father blesses you in the Lord.

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[1] see *Rom 3:4*

[2] see *John 14:6*.

[3] St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on St Matthew's Gospel*, 1, 5.

[4] see *Gen 2:1*

[5] see *Rom 6:4-5*

[6] see *Eph 1:9-10*

[7] see *Col 1:20*

[8] *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are (1 John 3:1).*

[9] see *John 1:14*

[10] see *1 John 4:8*

[11] see *Luke 12:49*

[12] see *Rom 5:5*

[13] *become perfectly one (John 17:23).*

[14] *new commandment (John 13:34).*

[15] see *1 John 3:18*

[16] see *1 John 4:20*

[17] see *John 3:16*

[18] see *Lev 6:12*

[19] see *Matt 11:12*

[20] *Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent (Luke 24:29).*

[21] see *John 17:22*

[22] see *Gen 2:15*

[23] *for freedom Christ has set us free (Gal 5:1).*

[24] *For not even his brothers believed in him (John 7:5).*

[25] *Now we know that you know all things (John 16:30)*

[26] *Tertullian, Apologeticum, 50, 3.*

[27] *see Matt 16:24*

[28] *see 1 Cor 7:7*

[29] *see 1 Cor 5:6*

[30] *your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matt 6:18).*

[31] *I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine (Is 43:1).*

[32] *like a strong man, [the sun] runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat (Ps 19[18]:5-6).*

[33] *nolite itaque errare, fratres mei dilectissimi: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers."*

[34] *The living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning (Ezek 1:14).*

[35] *who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's (Ps 103[102]:5).*

[36] *very proselytistic": see note 6 to Letter 7, §8.*

[37] *St Justin, The First Apology, 14.*

[38] *see Acts 2:4-6*

[39] *see John 7:38*

[40] *see 2 Pet 1:10*

[41] *the aroma of Christ (2 Cor 2:15).*

[42] *see John 3:1-3*

[43] *out of his good treasure brings forth good (Matt 12:35)*

[44] *see 1 Cor 10:17*

[45] *see John 1:14*

[46] *see Eph 4:15*

[47] *Put eloquent speech in my mouth (Esther 4:17y)*

[48] *see Sir 6:17*

<sup>[49]</sup> St Augustine, *The City of God*, I, c. 35.

<sup>[50]</sup> see *John* 6:35

<sup>[51]</sup> Antonio Machado, “Campos de Castilla”, *Proverbios y cantares*, Cátedra, Madrid, 1984.

<sup>[52]</sup> “*Iesu, Iesu...*”: “*Jesus, Jesus, always be Jesus to me!*”.

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