



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF UNIV 2002

Monday, 25 March 2002

Dear Young People,

1. I am pleased to welcome you gathered here for UNIV's traditional Roman gathering. You will take part in the Holy Week rites and this will offer you a special religious experience. I thank the Lord who this year has given me an opportunity to meet your association full of young people from many nations who take part in the formation activities organized by the Prelature of Opus Dei.

Thank you for your visit, and welcome to this house; it is also yours!

2. During your Roman stay, you intend to intensify your Christian formation around your theme: *Study, work, service*. The term "service" is the key for interpreting the two terms that go before it. In fact, study and work imply a personal attitude of willingness to give oneself which we call, precisely, service. It is a personal dimension that must characterize the person's character. The Second Vatican Council says it when it asserts, that only through the sincere gift of self, can the human creature fully discover himself (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 24). Dear young people, with an openness to keep brothers and sisters, each one perfects the basic thrust of his or her mission, through studies and work, putting to good use the talents that God has generously entrusted to you.

In this regard, how useful you will find the teachings of Bl. Josemaría Escrivá, the centenary of whose birth we celebrate this year! Several times he wanted to stress that in the Gospel Jesus is known as a *carpenter* (cf. Mk 6,3), indeed as *the son of the carpenter* (cf. Mt 13,55). Trained in school of Joseph, the Son of God made manual work not only a necessary source of daily bread, but a "service" to humanity, and indeed made it an integral element of the saving plan. In this way it becomes an example for us so that each person, following his own vocation, may fully realize his

own potential, putting it at the service of his neighbour.

3. In these days of Holy Week the reflection of the faithful is focused on the mystery of the Cross. In the light of this mystery, we can understand better the value of service, work and, for you now, study. The Cross is the symbol of a love that becomes a total and free gift. Does not the Cross witness to Christ's love for us? The Cross is a silent school of love, in which we learn how costly it is to love. In following Christ, the crucified King, believers learn that to "reign" is to serve the good of others and discover that the sincere gift of themselves expresses the true meaning of love. St Paul repeats to us that Christ loved us and gave himself for us (cf. Gal 2,20).

Bl. Escriva wrote: "The dignity of work is based on Love". And he continued: "Man's great privilege is to be able to love and thus to transcend what is fleeting and ephemeral. Man can love other creatures, he can pronounce an "I" and a "you" that are full of meaning.... Work is born of love, manifests love, is directed towards love" (*Christ Is Passing By*, n. 48).

A person who is faithful to this spiritual journey, seriously applies himself to study and work, and he becomes the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5,13-14). This is the invitation that you can take from the theme of the upcoming World Youth Day: be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in daily life.

It is not an easy path and it can be at odds with the mindset of your peers. It means going against the prevailing way of acting and today's fashion.

4. Dear young men and women! Do not be surprised at this: the mystery of the Cross teaches people to live and work in a way that is different from the spirit of this world.

The Apostle clearly alerts us to this: "*Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*" (Rom 12,12).

Dear young members of UNIV, resist the temptation of mediocrity and conformism. Only in this way will you be able to make your life a gift and a service to humanity; only in this way will you help to alleviate the hurt and suffering of many poor and marginalized persons who are very much a part of our technologically advanced world. Let the Law of God guide you in your studies today and in your future professional activity. In this way you will "*let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*" (Mt 5,16).

For all this to happen, prayer, intimate dialogue with the One who is calling you to be his disciples, must come first. Be generous in your active life, young people, and be deeply immersed in the contemplation of God's mystery. Make the Eucharist the heart of your day. In union with the

sacrifice of the Cross which it re-presents, offer your studies and your work, so that you yourselves may be "*spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ*" (1 Pt 2,5).

Mary is always beside you just as she was beside Jesus. To her, the *Handmaid of the Lord* and *Seat of Wisdom*, I entrust your resolutions and desires. For my part, I assure you a constant remembrance in prayer, as I wish you a fruitful Easter Triduum and a Blessed Easter. With these sentiments, I cordially bless you.