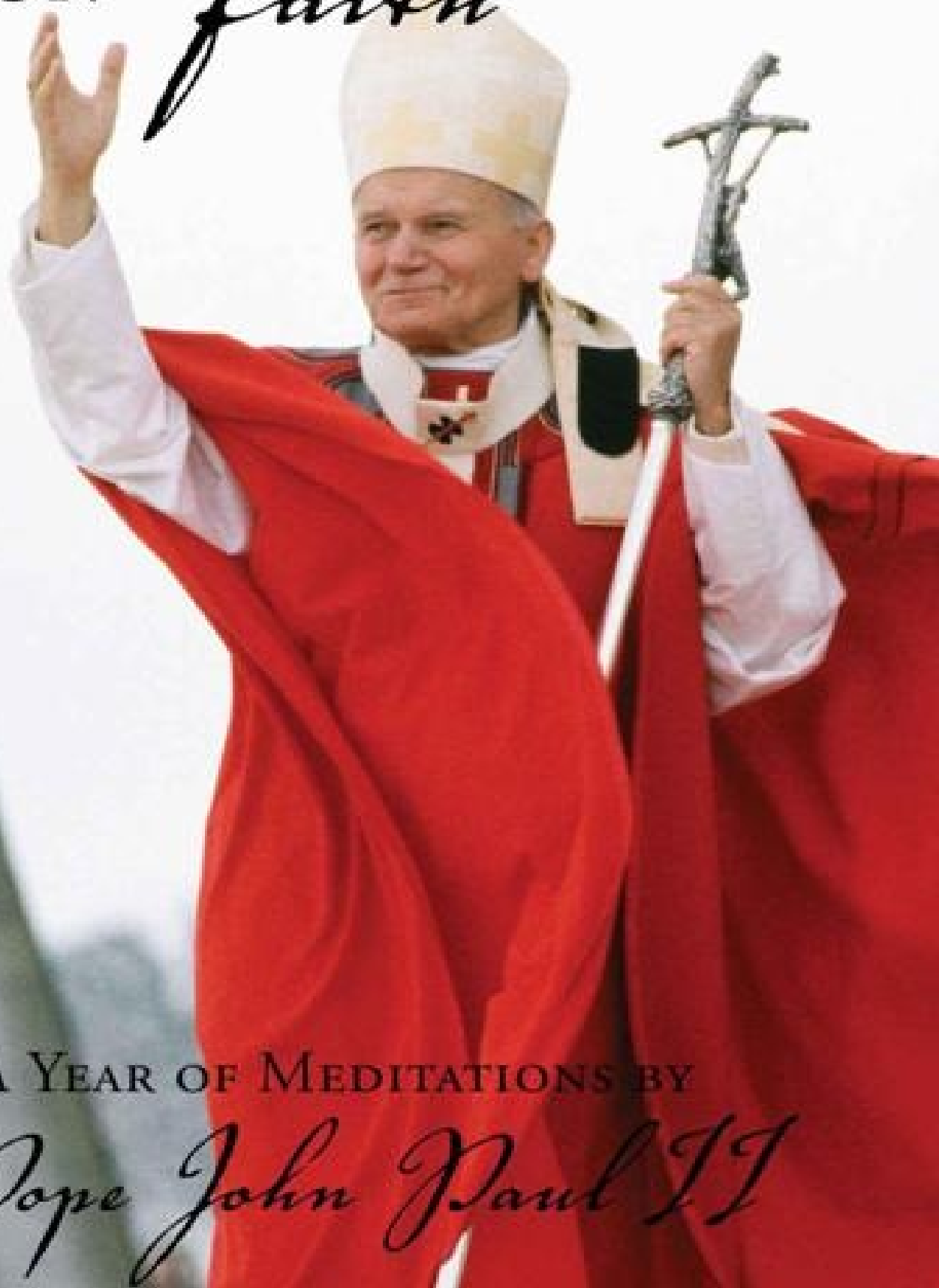


DAILY REFLECTIONS

ON *Faith*



A YEAR OF MEDITATIONS BY

Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II

DAILY REFLECTIONS ON FAITH

Edited by Leonardo Sapienza

Libreria Editrice Vaticana

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, DC

Contents

[PREFACE](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[FAITH IS](#)

[FAITH IS A GIFT](#)

[BEING CHRISTIAN IS NOT EASY](#)

[QUESTIONS](#)

[FAITH AND REVELATION](#)

[FAITH IN GOD, FAITH IN CHRIST, FAITH IN THE HOLY SPIRIT](#)

[THE FAITH OF MARY](#)

[HOW TO BELIEVE AS A CHRISTIAN](#)

[FAITH AND LIFE](#)

[FAITH AND ETHICS](#)

[FAITH AND THEOLOGY](#)

[FAITH AND SCIENCE](#)

[FAITH AND CULTURE](#)

[FAITH AND REASON](#)

[CHRISTIAN HUMANISM](#)

[FAITH AND THE FAMILY](#)

[FAITH AND EDUCATION](#)

[FAITH AND CATECHESIS](#)

[FAITH AND YOUNG PEOPLE](#)

[FAITH AND SUFFERING](#)

[FAITH IS STRENGTHENED WHEN IT IS GIVEN AWAY](#)

THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD

A STRONG FAITH

BE PEOPLE OF FAITH

Preface

In the homily on Holy Thursday in front of hundreds of priests gathered in the Basilica of St. Peter for the traditional Chrism Mass, during which the promises of priestly ordination are renewed, Pope Benedict XVI made mention of the Year of Faith. In the context of a widespread religious illiteracy that no longer knows the fundamental content of the faith, he said: “The Year of Faith, commemorating the opening of the Second Vatican Council fifty years ago, should provide us with an occasion to proclaim the message of faith with new enthusiasm and new joy. We find it of course first and foremost in Sacred Scripture, which we can never read and ponder enough. Yet at the same time we all experience the need for help in accurately expounding it in the present day, if it is truly to touch our hearts. This help we find first of all in the words of the teaching Church: the texts of the Second Vatican Council and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are essential tools which serve as an authentic guide to what the Church believes on the basis of God’s word. And of course this also includes the whole wealth of documents given to us by Pope John Paul II, still far from being fully explored.” The final expression is quite striking, with reference to the manifold and rich Magisterium of his predecessor, which still deserves to be known and “fully explored.”

These pages prepared by Leonardo Sapienza on the *symphony of the faith* are a prompt reply to the call of Benedict XVI.

Among the themes of great impact that John Paul II left to us, that of faith remains one of the richest and most fundamental. Not only because of the importance of the theme, but above all because of the testimony that he gave to it. His faith in Jesus Christ, in fact, shone through his words and actions and permitted all, believers and nonbelievers, to grasp a common foundation to which to make reference beyond their differences. It is enough to refer to his Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* in order to touch with our hands his conviction and his desire that the faith should be the irreplaceable companion of life for our contemporary world, so often confused, indecisive, and weak. Those words of his still resound today as a great provocation: “This does not mean that the link between faith and reason as it now stands does not need to be carefully examined, because each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled.

Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being” (*Fides et Ratio*, no. 48).

These are words of great truth that can be experienced every day. From this point, nonetheless, must be revived a common effort to restore to faith its role as a guide in the lives of persons. No one, especially today, can refuse to be a pilgrim on the roads of our increasingly small world with faith as a traveling companion. The alternative, unfortunately, would be that of becoming wanderers without destination or direction.

As is well known, John Paul II often expressed his most intimate thoughts in the language of poetry. Rereading a few of the verses of his *Roman Triptych* could permit a better grasp of his perspective. The verses entitled “The Source” become, perhaps, the most direct reference to the theme of faith:

The undulating wood slopes down
to the rhythm of mountain streams...
If you want to find the source,
you have to go up, against the current.
Break through, search, don’t yield,
you know it must be here somewhere.
Where are you?... Source, where are you?!

Silence...
Stream, woodland stream,
tell me the secret
of your origin!

(Silence—why are you silent?
With what care you have hidden the mystery
of your origin!)

Let me wet my lips
in spring water,

to feel its freshness,
its life-giving freshness.

Simple verses full of beauty that penetrate the mystery and provoke the readers to seek always, without tiring, until they find solace in the contemplation of the beauty of the mystery to which faith leads.

Blessed John Paul II was able to speak about faith in such a profound and persuasive way because he was first of all a man of faith. In the most difficult moments, when suffering was getting the upper hand, his trusting abandonment to the Lord appeared clearly in his face. Never as in his case has the profound unity between life and teaching become so effective, inspiring an intense and permanent movement that above all in thousands of young people has given life to the experience of the New Evangelization. This, in fact, remains the most immediate expression of faith that becomes participation in the joy discovered. When one has finally found the answer to the great questions that touch on the meaning of life, sharing it with others becomes a moral obligation. Faith, however, allows one to go beyond obligation. It is a sharing by its very nature because it allows one to see in the face of the other, the brother or sister for whom Christ gave his life out of love. Faith leads to this experience of love because it is born from love, is nourished by it, and lives it as an offering of total self-donation to the point of becoming mercy for those who are in need of forgiveness.

With these pages, Leonardo Sapienza allows one not only to enter into the richness of the teaching of John Paul II but also to make a journey of true catechesis. By beginning to identify the “why” of faith and in what it consists, he leads one step by step to discovering its presence in the various moments of life, to the point of understanding that only by believing and abandoning oneself to the mystery can one perceive the greatness of the gift received. With untiring zeal, Leonardo Sapienza has published over the course of the years valuable collections of aphorisms that span the various contents of faith and Christian witness. With *Daily Reflections on Faith*, he renders a great service to the Year of Faith. Meditating on these pages will reinforce our enthusiasm for growing in faith and presenting a consistent witness of this, so that the world may believe.

 RINO FISICHELLA
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE
PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

While certainly acknowledging the fact that the Church presents her teaching with varying degrees of magisterial authority, it is necessary to recover a sense of the wholeness and interior logic—the “symphony” of the faith. Undoubtedly the greatest service you can render to the Church at this present time is to make every effort to present anew the fullness and beauty of the apostolic faith, and thereby end the disharmony and confusion produced by teachings on questions of faith, morals and discipline which are at odds with the Church's Magisterium.

JOHN PAUL II
MARCH 20, 1993

Introduction

On March 13, 1985, John Paul II began a cycle of catechesis on faith, which he continued in all of the general audiences of that year.

The core of these weekly catecheses was the relationship between faith and secularization.

John Paul II expressed his concern: “The people of today, blinded by progress and prosperity, often look only to the earth; they no longer know how to look above the world in which they are enclosed: they accept secularization. They intentionally organize their lifestyles solely as a function of the realities of this world, without paying any attention to God and his will. This has always been with us, this same temptation to forget about God, or at least to live as if God did not exist” (Homily, May 16, 1985).

To live as if God did not exist: an ancient temptation!

How should we respond, then, to the desire for joy and happiness on the part of the modern person who no longer knows how to approach God?

The pope proposed his recipe: “This is my answer: love Christ... cling to Christ!” (May 14, 1985). Even if this is demanding! Or rather, precisely because it is demanding!

“Before being a doctrine, Christianity is an ‘event,’ or rather **a Person**: it is Jesus of Nazareth” (September 15, 1996). An *event* characterized by love. But not any sort of love, but rather a demanding mercy, with tough laws and yet captivating, because “those who love are not afraid of sacrifice.”

This is the method of the New Evangelization.

And it is the intention of the Holy Father Benedict XVI, who has proclaimed the **Year of Faith**, to be celebrated from October 11, 2012, to November 24, 2013.

The Holy Father recalls that “it is necessary to renew the enthusiasm of communicating the faith to promote a new evangelization of the communities... which are losing their reference to God so that they may rediscover the joy of believing.”

In order to assist reflection during the **Year of Faith**, or at any time on our journey of faith, 365 meditations on faith from the teachings of John Paul II are presented here.

The pontiff of *Fides et Ratio (On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason)* reminds us that if we do not rediscover the beauty, the joy, and the vitality of faith, every other action will remain ineffective.

A world without God would certainly not be a better world!

LEONARDO SAPIENZA

Faith Is...

This is what faith is all about!

It is the response of the rational and free human person to the word of the living God.

AUGUST 19, 2000



1

What is faith? Christ responds to Thomas: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (Jn 20:29).

What is faith? Faith is the opposite of incredulity, in that it is opposed to those who try to discard the cornerstone that is Christ. *Faith is*, therefore, *accepting the kingdom* that God is building in the world upon Christ, upon this sole cornerstone.

APRIL 7, 1991

2

Faith is *the beginning of the new life in God*. Because through it we are in Jesus Christ heirs of heaven: *coheirs of the divine life*.

Faith also gives a new and *definitive meaning to our life on earth*. It confers upon it *a new and supernatural dimension*. This new meaning, this supernatural dimension of faith leads us to see earthly life as a trial through which the human person enters into the *perspective of eternal life*.

For this reason, faith allows us to face, even with serenity, the various trials of life, and *sufferings* in particular.

This faith, which has suffered and suffers the attacks of secularism, must be renewed. Renewing faith means deepening one's understanding of Catholic teaching; having the vital experience of love for God and one's brothers and sisters; it means proclaiming the Gospel to others.

Only this renewed faith will be capable of leading to *fidelity*: fidelity to Jesus Christ, to the Church, to the human person.

JANUARY 28, 1985

3

In what does faith consist? The Constitution *Dei Verbum* explains that by faith, “man freely commits his entire self to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals’” (no. 5). Thus faith is not only the intellect’s adherence to the truth revealed, but also a submission of the will and a gift of self to God revealing himself. It is a stance that involves one’s entire existence.

The Council also recalls that this faith requires “the grace of God to move [man] and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth’” (ibid.). In this way we can see how, on the one hand, faith enables us to welcome the truth contained in Revelation and proposed by the Magisterium of those who, as Pastors of God’s People, have received a “sure charism of truth” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 8). On the other hand, faith also spurs us to true and deep consistency, which must be expressed in all aspects of a life modeled on that of Christ.

MARCH 18, 1998

4

Faith is above all an encounter: an encounter of Christ with each one of you. He is at your side, as a silent friend, when you inconsistently seek valid answers to your disquieting existential questions. He does not abandon you in situations of confusion and trial. He makes his word heard, he makes himself present and operative in the sacramental signs: he calls and awaits a response.

Dearest young people, seek Christ, seek this Teacher with passion, seek him above all things and all people. Then you will experience how true is the confession of the apostle Paul: “For to me life is Christ, and death is gain” (Phil 1:21). This is a profound, mysterious religious experience, which from an encounter becomes a journey of conversation and of radical adherence to the Gospel. This encounter with Christ is a journey of conversion.

Do not let this spiritual path seem impossible to you! Do not believe that it is reserved only to the specially chosen few. No, the invitation of the Redeemer is for all, it is for each one of you.

Following Jesus certainly requires courage and perseverance; it demands a change of mentality and the renunciation of the spirit of the world. It is a clear choice of the immutable spiritual values, and this does not seem easy, it never is easy, but it is not impossible. But you young people cannot help but love that which is demanding. *You are, in fact, called to be the intrepid witnesses of the truth of the Gospel of Christ in the next millennium, in the perspective of the third millennium.*

SEPTEMBER 23, 1990

5

Faith saves constantly. We carry the light of the Gospel, shed upon our lives, in vessels of faith.

We must take care that this vessel not be broken. Not by anyone. Not by any program, any ideology, any human person, any circumstance, any environment.

Faith is the treasure of the human heart.

Sometimes even those who do not have faith are the ones who bear witness to this. Even those who have lost it, or have not come to it. And let our prayer be this: *Lord, increase my faith* (cf. Lk 17:5), or, as we read elsewhere in the Gospel, Lord, “help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24). Let us pray in this way, so that human life may not lose for us its meaning, its ultimate meaning.

OCTOBER 27, 1985

6

Christian faith is the free and deliberate response of the human person to the self-revelation of God, which has reached its fullness in Jesus Christ. Through what St. Paul calls “the obedience of faith” (cf. Rom 16:26; 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6), the whole human person is abandoned to God, accepting as truth that which is contained in the word of Divine Revelation. *Faith is the work of grace* that acts in the intelligence and in the will of the human person, and at the same time it is a *free and deliberate* act of the human subject.

Faith, a gift of God to the human person, is also a theological virtue, and at the same time a stable disposition of the soul, meaning a lasting interior condition or attitude. It thus demands that the believing person cultivate it continuously, cooperating actively and deliberately with the grace that God offers.

Since faith finds its source in Divine Revelation, one essential aspect of *cooperation with the grace of faith* is given by constant and, as much as possible, systematic *contact with Sacred Scripture*, in which the truth revealed by God is transmitted to us in its most genuine form. This finds manifold expression in the life of the Church, as we also read in the constitution *Dei Verbum*.

JUNE 19, 1985

Christian faith, this gift of divine benevolence, handed down to you as the most precious treasure by your parents, must be preserved, protected, loved, defended! Remain firm in faith! Faith, which opens wide for us the infinite spaces of transcendence; faith, which makes us bow down before God; faith, which unites us intimately to Jesus Christ, true God and true Man; faith, which opens our hearts to hope and joy; faith, which makes us love others as brothers and sisters, because it works through charity (cf. Gal 5:6); faith, which gives us the key to understanding the authentically revolutionary value of the evangelical Beatitudes; faith, which makes us become the People of God! Faith in God, Creator and Father; faith in Christ, sole Savior and true Liberator; faith in the Church, Mother and Teacher of Truth. In the midst of the continuous and periodic crises of human ideologies, your faith and your hope are fixed in God (cf. 1 Pt 1:21).

SEPTEMBER 22, 1979

8

It is certainly necessary to have faith, but what kind of faith? What kind of faith is in question here?

“So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (Jas 2:17).

It helps us to understand what is the *authentic meaning of the Christian faith*: it is *personal adherence* to the Redeemer of the human person.

Ours, therefore, is not just any sort of faith. It is a *humble listening* to the divine Word; it is a *profession of fidelity* in the One who calls himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life; it is a *joyous proclamation of his victory* over sin and death; it is *unconditional acceptance* of his law.

Faith is the *proclamation of a suffering Messiah*—the servant of Yahweh—who in order to redeem the human race submitted himself without resistance to the humiliating trial of the Passion, as had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah: “I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who tore out my beard; My face I did not hide from insults and spitting” (Is 50:6).

SEPTEMBER 15, 1991

9

Faith means choosing God above visible things. Faith is adherence to him with all of the soul. Faith allows us to see all that exists with the eyes of God. Without faith, it is not possible to please God. Jesus openly asked us to believe in him. And the Apostles, after much hesitation, finally embraced faith in an irreversible way, to the supreme testimony of blood.

MARCH 15, 1992

10

Faith: it is not the latest news that makes a splash today and is already forgotten tomorrow. Faith is not a teaching that everyone can adapt to his or her needs and according to the moment. It is not an invention of ours or a creation of ours. Faith is the great divine gift that Jesus Christ has given to the Church.

Faith lives by the tradition of the Church. Only in it can we find with surety the truth of Jesus Christ. Only a living branch of the tree of the ecclesial community draws strength from its roots.

Without solid faith, you are devoid of support and at the mercy of the changing teachings of the time. Certainly today as well there are some environments in which correct teaching is no longer accepted, and in these are sought, according to one's own desires, always new teachers, who will flatter you as Paul had predicted. Do not let yourself be deceived. Do not listen to the prophets of egoism, who interpret individual evolution in a distorted way, who propose to you an earthly teaching of salvation and want to build a world without God.

In order to be able to say *Credo—I Believe*—it is necessary to be ready for abnegation, to give oneself; one must also be ready for sacrifice and renunciation and have a generous heart.

For the one who has this courage, the darkness is dispelled. The one who believes has found the beacon that lights up a sure path. The one who believes knows the direction, is able to find the way. The one who believes has found the right way, and no foolishness, of any false teacher, can lead him or her astray. The believer has a point of strength and agrees to live life in a manner worthy of a human being and pleasing to God. The one who believes is able to conclude his or her life deliberately, and accept it when God calls him or her to himself.

It is true, being part of the Church today is not the most comfortable way to live. It is easier to adapt and hide. Currently, *accepting the faith and living it means going against the tide*. This decision requires strength and courage.

MAY 1, 1987

11

“Faith is a personal act—the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 166).

A twofold movement will always be necessary to proclaim the word of God in its integrity and purity to the people of our time, so that it will be intelligible and also attractive to them. The discovery of the integral mystery of salvation presupposes, on the one hand, an encounter with the witness offered by the ecclesial community of a life inspired by the Gospel. Thus catechesis speaks with greater effect about what can be really seen in the community’s concrete life. The catechist in a way interprets the Church to those he is catechizing. He reads and teaches them to read the signs of faith, the most important of which is the Church herself.

OCTOBER 17, 1997

12

It is only in the light of faith that the great issues of ecclesial life can be faced. It is faith that directs us in all aspects of our pastoral activity: in divine worship and sacramental life, in preaching and in catechesis, in our relationship with the priests and religious, in our ministry to the family and to all other groups, in treating the moral problems and challenges that affect our people in their daily lives. It is faith that enlightens and inspires us in our own involvement in promoting integral human development and in helping to foster the well-being of... society, where millions and millions of men, women, and children are asking to have their human dignity reaffirmed and their hope in humanity reinforced.

OCTOBER 16, 1982

13

We must keep lit the lamp of faith.

It is a lamp that gives us the strength to accept the events of life, even painful and difficult, in the prosperity of the eternal happiness with God that awaits us at the end of existence. The testimony of the truth sometimes rankles, it creates opposition, it can arouse hatred and persecution. The divine Teacher had already predicted this: “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Jn 15:20); “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you... because of me” (Mt 5:11). Faith tells us that Christ has overcome the world: he is always with us, every day, until the end of history. Let us therefore raise a thought full of affection and admiration for so many of our brothers and sisters who are currently suffering for their faith. Let us remember them! Let us pray for them! Let us thank them, because their example also helps to keep our flame lit.

It is a lamp that must be constantly fed with prayer and meditation, because it is only from profound personal convictions and the supernatural help of grace that the light of faith in us draws its vigor. In order to face the difficulties and adversities of the world, it is necessary that the lamp of faith be well kindled and its light shining strongly, so that it can give everything, even life!

NOVEMBER 22, 1984

“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks to us in these words. *Faith*, which makes the human person pass from visible things *to the invisible reality of God and of eternal life*, resembles that journey to which Abraham was called by God (and because of which he is called “father of all those who believe”: cf. Rom 4:11; 4:12). Afterward we read in the Letter to the Hebrews: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land...” (Heb 11:8– 9). Yes, so it is. Faith is the spiritual pilgrimage on which the human person sets out, following the word of the living God, in order to arrive in the land of the promised peace and of happiness, at union with God “face-to-face”; at that union which will fill, within the human heart, the deepest hunger and thirst: the hunger for truth and the thirst for love.

Let us learn simple *faith*, even that of children, and at the same time one that is deliberate, mature, and proven. The faith that this age of ours demands of us Christians. An open and courageous faith. A faith full of hope. A faith that generates good works: “faith working through love” (cf. Gal 5:6). Let us learn such faith constantly. And let us pray frequently to Christ in order to obtain it: Lord, “increase our faith” (Lk 17:5); we believe, help our unbelief (cf. Mk 9:24).

AUGUST 10, 1980

Faith is the “search” for God. What Pascal writes is significant: “You would not seek me if you did not already possess me” (*Pensées* II, 9). “Before” the “search” for God on the part of the human person *is the divine gift of faith*, by which we seek “constantly his face” (cf. Ps 104[105]:4).

What is faith? The Apostle responds: “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). This is why, through faith, in a certain sense we transcend the limits of visible reality, in order to enter into the invisible. *The visible, in a certain way, is testimony of the invisible.* The universe testifies to God as its Creator. We read in the Letter to the Hebrews: “By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible” (Heb 11:3). The testimony of the word of God the Creator is thus written in all of creation.

Beyond this testimony, accessible to all, faith *finds support in the human testimonies of Divine Revelation.* The ancients, in fact, “were well attested” (Heb 11:2). “In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son” (Heb 1:1-2).

The Second Vatican Council teaches: “‘The obedience of faith’ (Rom 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering ‘the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,’ and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him. If this faith is to be shown, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving ‘joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it.’ To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation, the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 5).

Faith is a gift from God that comes to the human person through the word of absolute Truth, but at the same time it is the *response of the human person* who sincerely seeks the encounter with this Truth: the encounter with God. Today, as we approach the third millennium of the Christian era, *people of faith are necessary.* People who may be the light and strength of a new society: politicians, administrators, teachers, public officials, business leaders, laborers,

farmers. People who belong to “a society that must respond to human needs, at the level both of material goods and of spiritual and religious goods, a society founded on a system of values that protects it from the manipulation of individual or collective egoism” (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, III, 2, p. 157).

This task requires the constant education of Christians in the faith, especially of Christians who have greater and more direct responsibility for the construction of society. This is required by the very dimension of their nature, made up of body and soul, because they have been called by the Father to take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven that has been prepared for them (cf. Mt 25:34). From this stems the concern to discover the deepest meaning of this world, which is the work of the Creator. If the world came from the hands of God, if God has created the human person in his image and likeness (Gn 1:26), then the human person must *extrapolate the divine meaning* that all things naturally possess. There does not exist, there has never existed an incompatibility between human wisdom and faith. From the deepest intellectual effort to the simplest manual operation, everything can and must lead to God. Because of this it is necessary to cultivate faith in harmony with each person’s level of education, social responsibility, and professional capacity.

Our time needs the practical and beneficial presence of men and women who are able to demonstrate their faith through their works.

What will be “the *new society*” as the *fruit of education in the faith*?

Christ responds to this question with his words in the Gospel: “the salt of the earth, and the light of the world!” (cf. Mt 5:13-14).

The salt that gives savor to food is the image of that which must be the fruit of an education in the faith that supports spiritual and moral health in the most varied areas of human existence: the person, the family, the community, the society. In this way all are protected from degradation, from what Christ called being “thrown out and trampled underfoot” (cf. Mt 5:13).

It is at the same time *the light that shines for others*, that illuminates “all in the house” (Mt 5:15). Faith is the light that is not put “under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand” so that it may “shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Mt 5:15-16).

This is what Christ said, *responding to your question*: what is faith, and what does it mean to be educated in the faith for a new society?

OCTOBER 15, 1991

16

Faith demands that *we listen to the word of God* authoritatively proclaimed by the Apostles and their successors. This is not a vague and subjective attitude, but the adherence of the mind and heart to revealed Truth, or rather to Christ himself, “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).

From faith accepted and lived is then unleashed, in believers, the drive to *proclaim and bear witness to the “Good News” of the Gospel* to all people. As we rapidly approach the third millennium of the Christian era, the Church feels summoned more urgently than ever before by the missionary mandate of Jesus: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).

NOVEMBER 15, 1992

The Christian faith is not identified with the mere acceptance of a complex of truths, although it cannot exist without the adherence of the mind to revealed truth and the constant and loving effort to understand it. Nor can the Christian faith be reduced to simple obedience to the commandments of the Lord, although it cannot dispense with the consistency of life with the truth that is professed. The Christian faith manifests its absolute originality and novelty in being *a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, a communion and sharing of life with him.*

MAY 14, 1992

Believing means choosing the Lord as one's only good, or rather allowing oneself to be completely taken by him and professing him with one's works: "You are my Lord, you are my only good.... LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you have made my destiny secure" (Ps 16:2, 5).

But precisely because believing is "giving credit to God," the act of faith also means "freely assenting to the truth revealed by him" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 5).

SEPTEMBER 29, 1991

Christian moral teaching, even in its Biblical roots, acknowledges the specific importance of a fundamental choice which qualifies the moral life and engages freedom on a radical level before God. It is a question of the *decision of faith*, of the *obedience of faith* (cf. Rom 16:26) “by which man makes a total and free self-commitment to God, offering ‘the full submission of intellect and will to God as he reveals.’” This faith, which works through love (cf. Gal 5:6), comes from the core of man, from his “heart” (cf. Rom 10:10), whence it is called to bear fruit in works.

ENCYCLICAL *VERITATIS SPLENDOR*, no. 66

The “miracles and signs” that Jesus performed to confirm his messianic mission and the coming of the Kingdom of God are ordered and strictly connected to the call to faith. In relation to the miracle, this call has two forms: faith precedes the miracle and is even the condition for it to be realized; faith constitutes an effect of the miracle, because it is prompted by it in the souls of those who have received it or have been its witnesses.

It is well known that faith is a response of the human person to the Word of Divine Revelation. The miracle takes place in an organic bond with this revealed word of God. It is a “sign” of his presence and his action; a sign, it might be said, that is particularly intense. All of this explains in a sufficient way the particular bond that exists between the “miracle-signs” of Christ and faith: a bond that is delineated so clearly in the Gospels.

When he “sees faith,” Jesus works the miracle. The factor of faith is indispensable; but as soon he sees it, the heart of Jesus is eager to grant the requests of the needy who come to him so that he may help them by his divine power.

The principle of faith is therefore fundamental in the relationship with Christ, both as a condition to obtain the miracle and as the purpose for which this is performed.

DECEMBER 16, 1987

21

Have faith, therefore! Faith is seeing: open wide the eyes of your hearts!

In what takes place during the Last Supper, is there not a logic that is astonishing? But is this not precisely the logic of the whole Gospel? In what other way, if not this, could the mission be confirmed of the One who “loved his own in the world and... loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1)?

What we are living in now is a decisive hour, the hour of faith, the hour in which we are called to accept in its entirety the Word of Jesus, even if it goes beyond human understanding: the hour in which we celebrate the “mystery of faith”; the hour in which we repeat and discover with Peter, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

APRIL 4, 1996

Faith Is a Gift

*Believe me, faith is a treasure, a precious pearl.
Those who have the fortune of possessing it do all they can to keep it and
cultivate it. And that means possessing it in an ever deeper way.*

FEBRUARY 21, 1992



Faith is a gift from God: “For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father” (Mt 16:17). Human beings are often *not equal* to such a gift. Even Peter’s faith went through its trials.

It happens even today that one can feel frightened by the violence of the winds contrary to Catholic Christian faith and to morality. It is not easy to live the faith consistently in the environment of modern society, marked by materialism and permissiveness. *Living as Christians* often means going against the tide, against the mentality in fashion. How many winds seek to sink the Christian of today!

In order not to succumb, one must believe with a more personalized and convinced faith, and pray with greater fervor and trust. I repeat to you what I said in Santiago de Compostela, to the seafaring people there: “Unconditional and fearless faith in the close presence of the Lord must be the compass that directs your life of work and family toward God, from whom come light and happiness, your life of work and family. The world in which we are living needs—like you—this faith, this beacon of light. Forgetting about God, as the materialistic tendencies presume to do, would mean sinking into the solitude, into the darkness, remaining without a course and without a guide.”

AUGUST 12, 1984

23

Faith in Christ is a gift. It is not a human achievement. Only God the Father can draw us to Jesus, only he can give us the grace to know Jesus, to accept him as the eternal Son of God, and to profess our faith in him.

But the wonderful gift of faith is not separate from the Cross. Belief in Christ is not free from difficulties. It is not without cost. In fact, our faith in Jesus Christ is often put to the test.

When our faith is tested, when we are tempted to doubt and turn away, we can find courage and renewed hope in these words of Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Christ gives us the strength to live according to our faith, and to meet all the challenges against it. From Christ we must learn the way to overcome those sad divisions which still exist today among Christians. We must be eager to be fully one in faith and love.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1987

24

It is God who gives the strength to believe and to decide: “No one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father” (Jn 6:65). In the face of supernatural decisions, the human person by himself or herself would be lost, because “the flesh is of no avail” (Jn 6:63). Only the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the substantial and eternal love of the Father and the Son, he alone “gives life” (Jn 6:63).

“Master, to whom shall we go?” (Jn 6:68). To this question, which in Peter already finds the answer that is correct because it is based on faith, we as well are called to give an adequate response, which is precisely that of faith.

AUGUST 21, 1988

Our identity as Christians is rooted in the gift of faith. We have come to know and to believe in Christ. We are convinced that he is “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). And while we treasure this gift of faith, we know too that it must be guarded and developed, strengthened and shared. We must exercise our faith in love, putting it into practice in every aspect of our daily lives.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1987

26

Faith is a gift, and believers, in acknowledging God as Father, reach the fullness of their humanity: it is then that they know how to live and to die, to hope, to love, spreading serenity and peace around them. They contribute in this way to the construction of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. 1 Pt 3:13).

I exhort you, dearest brothers and sisters, not to pose resistance to Christ, not to reject the Word who has become flesh. Instead, welcome him without reservation, because around him all of human existence and the whole world are called to gather in unity and to be renewed.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1990

Rediscover the joy of the Christian vocation. The Spirit of the Lord is upon you. Faith is a gift that God has gratuitously bestowed upon you. It is the flame that the Spirit kindled in you on the day of your Baptism. It, and only it, can illuminate and fully give meaning to life. Too often, instead, this light is covered up by the thousands of fallacious appeals of the various cultures of death that threaten you; too often material progress, while it satisfies the demands of the body, leaves unsatisfied the soul's thirst for the infinite; too often moral indifference and indistinction, selfishness and sin completely extinguish this mysterious fire of holiness. And then one is groping about in the dark, surrounded by the chill of solitude that nothing and no one is able to fill.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1990

The gift of faith is neither extraneous nor hostile to the privilege of knowledge.

Trust in rationality and the use of scientific methods not only do not represent an obstacle to faith, but make the need for it more keenly felt, because it is precisely faith that is able to give you a new, original, and true perspective on all of reality. It is the great gift that God himself has given to us in Christ so that all of being, all of creation, and therefore all of knowledge may be redeemed from the desperate and confused dispersion into which everything was plunged when the disobedience of sin separated the human person from the Creator.

If on the one hand this gift of faith makes you different, misunderstood, and almost strangers in the world dominated by disbelief, on the other hand it must make you ever more capable of understanding everyone, ever more attentive to discover the spark of the presence of God in each person, and in every human achievement some glimmer of divine truth.

I hope that you will be able to meet true teachers, brothers and sisters in faith, who wish to walk along with you on the path of Christian wisdom: together you will be able to attend to the great task of making faith the principle of every evaluation of nature, history, behavior. Together you will be able to realize an authentic scholarly and educational communion, in which preparation for your future professions will be enriched by a common experience of the search for the truth and for the true good of the human person.

JUNE 7, 1988

29

The first gift that you must present is *the gift of faith*.

It is not possible to conceive of a religious life that is not strongly rooted in faith and does not grow by faith.

I therefore urge you to educate young people to look with a spirit of faith within themselves and at their decisions.

Therefore, dearest, encourage the young people entrusted to you to *a life of true faith!*

SEPTEMBER 28, 1984

Being Christian Is Not Easy

The challenge for all of the baptized is to bear witness to their faith with intelligence and courage, in such a way as to bring salvation and hope to the cultures of our time.

JANUARY 15, 1988



It is not easy to be Christians today!

It is not easy for faith, because one must believe all that Christ has revealed and that the Church teaches with its Magisterium; *it is not easy* for moral conduct, because one must observe all of the commandments and exercise charity, sometimes even with heroic commitment; *it is not easy* for the witness that one must give to society, while one is tempted to go along with the worldly and earthly mentality.

MAY 9, 1986

31

Christianity is difficult, and, in order to be lived with fidelity and consistency, it not rarely demands heroism. Today, without any fear and with full trust in divine grace, we must preach and practice heroism! Today, to a world that is often forgetful and inattentive, we must openly proclaim that we are on the earth as in exile, and we aspire to true happiness, the eternal happiness of God! As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “While we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.... Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5:6-10). Today in particular we must have trust in the action of divine grace, which, like the seed in the parable, works in the secret of consciences and develops and bears fruit; how and when, we do not know (cf. Mk 4:26-29)!

JULY 6, 1991

Christianity is a demanding faith, and you know this well. Because of this you are not rarely tempted to discouragement and indecision. To the young man who asked him, “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” Jesus responded in the end, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mt 19:16, 22). But before this, the divine Teacher “looking at him, loved him” (Mk 10:21).

“Come, follow me!” It is only from love that the call of the Redeemer emerges, which constitutes the response—the only exhaustive response—to the aspiration for “something more” that dwells in the heart of every person.

To you as well, Christ addresses the same affectionate call: “Come, follow me!” His eyes meet yours, his heart speaks to yours. Be not afraid! Welcome his word. In this way you will enter into his mystery, and you will discover the authentic secret of your human and spiritual rebirth; you will welcome the principles of Christian morality not as a heavy burden, but as a necessary demand of love. *Love rejoices in the truth*. “Seek out this truth,” I wrote in 1985 in the *Letter to the Young People of the World*, “where it is really to be found! If necessary, be resolved to go against the current of popular opinion and propaganda slogans! Do not be afraid of the love that places clear demands on people. These demands— as you find them in the constant teaching of the Church— are precisely capable of making your love a true love” (*Letter to the Young People of the World*, 1985, no. 10).

APRIL 19, 1991

Faith always includes a challenge. It has never been otherwise. Today there are difficulties for those who want to be Christian. But yesterday there were others. And tomorrow—this is a prophecy that one can hazard without the fear of being proven wrong—tomorrow the new generations of young people will have to face new difficulties. Being Christian has never been, and never will be, a “tranquil” choice.

I ask, however: *the decision for Christ*, does it not draw precisely from this a particular power of attraction? That which is arduous requires courage, and in courage is expressed in a singular way the characteristic nobility of the human being. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that in other regions of the world other young people pay a very high price to bear witness to their consistency with the Gospel of Christ. And in spite of this they do not lose the desire to laugh and to sing. Their experience tells us that from renunciation and sacrifice, confronted out of love for Christ, joy is unleashed. I hope that this may also be your experience.

MAY 14, 1985

Christian life is the courageous following of the divine Teacher who by his Passion, Death, and Resurrection has regenerated believers for a living hope, for a journey of freedom, for a sanctification that makes them true children of the one Father. And the Church, intimately associated with the Paschal Mystery, is called to grow through the Gospel and the sacraments, so as to be sign and instrument of the presence of the Savior in the world and for every person.

In this perspective of belonging seriously to Christ in the Church, *may you be aware of your task* in the ecclesial community and in the world. *To express the faith in everyday life:* this is your mission, which summons and urges you on to ever more decisive goals of shared responsibility, in a faithful and courageous evangelical journey that responds to the spiritual demands of our time.

May you be open, therefore, to divine grace; live in fraternal solidarity with all, ready to collaborate and to work generously in order to build peace and true human development. *Make more room for charity in truth.*

NOVEMBER 9, 1991

You all know how difficult it is to *bring a person back to thinking of God*. It is difficult when one is immersed in a culture that for ideological or practical reasons produces a society that is ensnared in earthly realities. This leads to a certain reaction against religion and faith. This leads to that lack of knowledge of the message of the Gospel and of the Church that conceals, rather than exalts, the true face of God. From this context of distance and separation from Christ stems a way of life that does not facilitate true freedom of thinking and deciding, and limits true interior freedom.

These are the circumstances that make the ministry of your Churches difficult and laborious, and not infrequently generate a certain discouragement among your pastors or among the faithful involved in spreading the word of God.

The Church understands these circumstances, it follows your experiences. Nonetheless, it does not cease to proclaim that human beings have received from God the endowments of intelligence and freedom that make them the masters of their actions. It always recalls that all persons are called to communicate with God himself in their capacity as children, and to participate in his own happiness. The Church knows, because it is an expert on the human spirit, that if the religious foundation and the hope in eternal life are lacking, human dignity is wounded in a serious manner, while it reminds everyone that the enigmas of life and death, of sin and suffering remain without a solution if one does not acknowledge the voice of God (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 21).

In the face of the problems connected to a widespread abandonment of the faith on the part of many, a unified pastoral response is necessary. Energy must not be wasted; we must not venture into pastoral experiences devoid of sufficient guarantees.

MARCH 2, 1991

In the midst of your laborious activities, at times discouragement can creep in or the fog that obscures faith can become denser. It is precisely then that you must be able to turn to prayer and remember that the Lord does not abandon you, that you have been called by Jesus to be with him in his boat where he watches over you, even if to human sight he could give the impression that he has fallen asleep: “Why are you terrified, O you of little faith” (Mt 8:26). Unconditional and fearless faith in the close presence of the Lord must be the compass that directs you toward God, from whom come light and happiness, your life of work and family.

The world in which we are living needs—like you— this faith, this beacon of light. Forgetting about God, as the materialistic tendencies presume to do, would mean sinking into the solitude, into the darkness, remaining without a course and without a guide. For this reason, dear brothers and sisters, I strongly encourage you to cultivate the faith you have received. You already know how to draw near to Christ, how to be with him, being disciples of his person and of his message; and this experience of yours must benefit your families and those who, in your voyages on the sea, draw near to you; even those who perhaps have not heard the message of the Gospel.

NOVEMBER 9, 1982

The Apostles ask Jesus: “Increase our faith” (Lk 17:5). This must be our constant prayer. *Faith is always demanding*, because faith leads us beyond ourselves. It leads us directly to God. Faith also imparts a vision of life’s purpose and stimulates us to action.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a private opinion, a remote spiritual ideal, or a mere program for personal growth. The Gospel is the power which can transform the world! The Gospel is no abstraction: it is the living person of Jesus Christ, the word of God, the reflection of the Father’s glory (cf. Heb 1:2), the Incarnate Son who reveals the deepest meaning of our humanity, and the noble destiny to which the whole human family is called (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22). Christ has commanded us to let the light of the Gospel shine forth in our service to society. How can we profess faith in God’s word, and then refuse to let it inspire and direct our thinking, our activity, our decisions, and our responsibilities toward one another?

OCTOBER 8, 1995

Do not allow yourselves to be thrown into discouragement and resignation by the tempest and by the sea! Instead, be united in hope, and strengthen yourselves in the common faith! Remember the long history of the Christian faith in this country! Do not allow this faith to become weaker and wearier! Be not afraid for the future of the Christian faith and of the Church! On the contrary, continue toward the next millennium with courage and trust in Jesus Christ.

We know that in the future many of the external conditions of private and public life will change. This does not leave the Church indifferent. But aboard the ship of the Church, fear and complaining must never dominate our hearts. Let us have trust in the Lord, because we believe in his vital presence in the Church.

JUNE 22, 1996

The abandonment of the values of transcendence also unleashes *a glaring impoverishment of human values*. In fleeing from faith, human beings once again show themselves to be incapable of providing for themselves even in their earthly interests. In this way can be noted a sort of bitter disdain for life, in the context of a worrying decline of the values of life, both family and social. The statistics speak of the progressive expansion of the wounds of the interruption of human life in its beginning or in its coming to an end, of drug abuse, of the marginalization of the elderly.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1990

The Church refuses to espouse that extremism or fundamentalism which, in the name of an ideology purporting to be scientific or religious, claims the right to impose on others its own concept of what is right and good. *Christian truth is not an ideology*. Rather it recognizes that changing social and political realities cannot be confined within rigid structures. What the Church does is constantly to reaffirm the transcendent dignity of the human person, and constantly to defend human rights and freedom. The freedom which the Church promotes attains its fullest development and expression only in openness to and acceptance of the truth. “In a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation and man is exposed to the violence of passion and to manipulation, both open and hidden” (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 46).

FEBRUARY 23, 2000

Questions

If the word of God is to be rooted in the human heart, it must receive a just response: this response is faith.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1996



41

The Church, in raising the questions that exist within the human person, at the same time gives their essential response. This response is Christ, it is his Gospel, his Paschal Mystery, his Cross and Resurrection. This response, above all in its Paschal finale, is a special and ineffable gift from God to humanity.

MARCH 20, 1986

We live in an era when the quantity and speed of information are increasing phenomenally. The risk is that the dizzying flow of news about so many things will stifle questions about the crucial issues of life. “Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?” (*Fides et Ratio*, no. 1). These questions have always been at the center of attention for philosophy and religion: in this regard we recall the famous admonition, “Know yourself,” carved on the temple portal at Delphi.

In fact, it is precisely when he looks ardently and in the right direction for the answer to these fundamental questions that the human being shows he is “wise.” Philosophy, whose precise meaning is “love of wisdom,” is rooted in this fundamental quest. Faith, for its part, does not fear but rather encourages this exercise of reason. I wrote in the Introduction to the Encyclical: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”

DECEMBER 6, 1998

This is another mystery: Why do some believe and others do not? An answer must be given at this point. The different aspects, the different situations could be analyzed; for example, the aspect of faith as a gift of God, faith as knowledge, faith as encounter with a person, yes, various aspects, and thus by analyzing these different aspects one could approach the mystery of unbelief: How is it that someone cannot believe and does not believe? We can ask if someone who thinks he does not believe is really an unbeliever, or a believer if he wants to be one, if he seeks faith; in any case, we could perhaps respond in the words about Jesus that state, “[He] did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well”; and therefore if faith and the lack of faith are a mystery of the person, Jesus knows that, Jesus understands that, he knows if the person is at fault or perhaps suffers from it unintentionally. I think that very often the fact of not being able to believe is a form of suffering, but clearly we find ourselves here close to a mystery of the human spirit.

AUGUST 27, 1982

What have I done with my Baptism? How am I responding to my vocation? What have I done with my Confirmation? Have I made the gifts and charisms of the Spirit bear fruit? Is Christ the “Thou” always present in my life? Am I fully and deeply a member of the Church, mystery of missionary communion, as willed by her Founder and as realized in her living Tradition? In my decisions, am I faithful to the truth taught by the Church’s Magisterium? Is my marital, family, and professional life imbued with Christ’s teaching? Is my social and political involvement based on Gospel principles and the social doctrine of the Church? What contribution do I make to creating ways of life more worthy of man and to inculturating the Gospel amid the great changes taking place?

MARCH 1, 1999

Over and above the crises of civilizations and the forms of philosophical and moral relativism, it is up to Pastors and faithful to identify and examine the essential questions and aspirations of our contemporaries, to enter into dialogue with individuals and peoples, and to find original and inculturated ways of presenting the Gospel message and the person of Christ the Redeemer. Culture and art have a wealth of resources to draw from in order to pass on the Christian message. To convey it, however, they require knowledge so that it can be interpreted and understood.

At a time when the great Europe is rediscovering strong ties, it is important to uphold the world of culture, arts, and letters, so that it may contribute to building a society that is not founded on materialism but on moral and spiritual values.

The spread of ideologies in various social sectors demands a new intellectual thrust from Christians in order to propose strong reflections that will reveal to the younger generations the truth about man and God, and will invite them to acquire an ever more refined knowledge of the faith. It is by means of philosophical and catechetical formation that the young will be able to discern the truth. A serious rational process is a bulwark against all that has to do with ideologies. It develops the taste to penetrate ever deeper so that philosophy and reason may be open to Christ. This is what happened in all periods of the Church's history, and particularly in the Patristic period when the newborn Christian culture was able to enter into dialogue with other cultures, especially Latin and Greek. Such a reflection will also become an invitation to move from a rational to a spiritual approach, to arrive at a personal encounter with Christ, and to build up the inner being.

MARCH 13, 2004

Faith and Revelation

Faith is the response on the part of humanity to the word of Divine Revelation.

MARCH 2, 1988



The originality of faith lies above all *in its supernatural character*. If in faith the human person gives a response to the “self-revelation of God” and accepts the divine plan of salvation, which consists in participation in the nature and intimate life of God himself, such a response must lead human beings *beyond all that they are able to reach by their own faculties and the powers of their own nature*, in terms of both knowledge and will: this is a matter, in fact, of the knowledge of an infinite truth and of the transcendent fulfillment of the aspirations to goodness and to happiness that are rooted in the will, in the heart: this is a matter, in fact, of “eternal life.”

The *grace of faith* is precisely such an *attraction* exercised by God on the *interior essence of the human person*, and indirectly on *all human subjectivity*, so that human beings may respond fully to the “self-revelation” of God in Jesus Christ, abandoning themselves to him. This grace precedes the act of faith, it stimulates, sustains, and guides it: its fruit is that the *person* first of all becomes *capable* of “believing in God,” and in fact believes. Thus by virtue of prevenient and cooperating grace is established a supernatural interpersonal “communion” that is nothing less than the living structure that bears the faith through which the human person who believes in God participates in his “eternal life”: “knowing the Father and the one he has sent, Jesus Christ” (cf. Jn 17:3), and, through charity, enters into a relationship of friendship with them (cf. Jn 14:23; 15:15)

APRIL 10, 1985

“Believing” means accepting and *recognizing as true and corresponding to reality* the content of that which is said, meaning the words of another person (or *of multiple persons*), because of his or her (or their) credibility. This credibility decides in a given case the particular authority of the person: *the authority of the truth*. So in saying “I believe,” we express at the same time a twofold reference: to the person and to the truth; to the truth, in consideration of the person who enjoys particular qualifications of credibility.

Faith is conditioned by Revelation. It is the response of the human person to Divine Revelation.

Let us say from now on that this response is possible and obligatory, because *God is credible*. No one is as credible as he is. No one possesses as he does the authority of the truth. In no case as in faith in God is realized the conceptual and semantic value of this word so common in human language: “I believe,” “I believe you.”

MARCH 13, 1985

Divine Revelation lies at the foundation of faith, of the “I believe” of the human person. At the same time, the passages of Sacred Scripture in which this Revelation has been handed down teach us that *human beings are capable* of knowing God by reason alone: they are capable of *a certain “knowledge” of God*, even if in an indirect and not immediate way. So next to the “I believe” is found a certain “I know.” This “I know” concerns the existence of God, and even his essence up to a certain point. This intellectual knowledge of God is treated in a systematic way by a science called “natural theology,” which has a philosophical character and arises on the terrain of metaphysics, or the philosophy of being. It focuses on knowledge of God as the *first cause* and *ultimate end* of the universe.

MARCH 20, 1985

Faith—that which is encapsulated in the expression “I believe”—remains in an essential relationship with Revelation. The response to the fact that God reveals “himself” to human beings, and at the same time unveils before them the mystery of the eternal will to save humanity through “participation in the divine nature,” is the “abandonment to God” on the part of man, in which is expressed *the obedience of faith*. Faith is the obedience of reason and will to God who reveals. This “obedience” consists in the first place of *accepting* “as truth” that which God reveals: human beings remain in harmony with their own rational nature in this acceptance of the content of Revelation. But through faith, human beings abandon themselves completely to this God who reveals himself, and then, as they *receive the gift “from on high,”* they respond to God *with the gift* of their own humanity. Thus with the obedience of reason and will to God who reveals, there begins a new way of existing of the whole human person in relationship to God.

APRIL 3, 1985

The enrichment and deepening of faith are dominant motifs of the conciliar Magisterium, and form the presupposition for the practical execution of this Magisterium, of which they can be called the immediate fruit.

“‘The obedience of faith’ (Rom 13:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering ‘the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,’ and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 5). These expressions succinctly summarize the dynamic of faith as an act that engages the free faculties of the human person in response to the action of God, and are connected to the dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* of the First Vatican Council. From faith are derived the moral norm, the way of life, the practical orientation in every circumstance.

NOVEMBER 24, 1985

Christian Revelation is the true lodestar of men and women as they strive to make their way amid the pressures of an immanentist habit of mind and the constrictions of a technocratic logic. It is the ultimate possibility offered by God for the human being to know in all its fullness the seminal plan of love which began with creation. To those wishing to know the truth, if they can look beyond themselves and their own concerns, there is given the possibility of taking full and harmonious possession of their lives, precisely by following the path of truth.

ENCYCLICAL *FIDES ET RATIO*, NO. 15

Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.

The Council teaches that “the obedience of faith must be given to God who reveals himself.” This brief but dense statement points to a fundamental truth of Christianity. Faith is said first to be an obedient response to God. This implies that God be acknowledged in his divinity, transcendence and supreme freedom. By the authority of his absolute transcendence, God who makes himself known is also the source of the credibility of what he reveals. By faith, men and women give their assent to this divine testimony. This means that they acknowledge fully and integrally the truth of what is revealed because it is God himself who is the guarantor of that truth. They can make no claim upon this truth which comes to them as gift and which, set within the context of interpersonal communication, urges reason to be open to it and to embrace its profound meaning. This is why the Church has always considered the act of entrusting oneself to God to be a moment of fundamental decision which engages the whole person. In that act, the intellect and the will display their spiritual nature, enabling the subject to act in a way which realizes personal freedom to the full. It is not just that freedom is part of the act of faith: it is absolutely required. Indeed, it is faith that allows individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom. Put differently, freedom is not realized in decisions made against God. For how could it be an exercise of true freedom to refuse to be open to the very reality which enables our self-realization? Men and women can accomplish no more important act in their lives than the act of faith; it is here that freedom reaches the certainty of truth and chooses to live in that truth.

In short, the knowledge proper to faith does not destroy the mystery; it only reveals it the more, showing how necessary it is for people’s lives: Christ the Lord “in revealing the mystery of the Father and his love fully reveals man to himself and makes clear his supreme calling,” which is to share in the divine mystery of the life of the Trinity.

If it is correct to say that faith consists of accepting as true that which God has revealed, the Second Vatican Council has appropriately stressed that this is also a *response of the whole person*, emphasizing its “existential” and “personalistic” dimension. If in fact God “reveals himself” and manifests to man the salvific “mystery of his will,” it is right to demonstrate to *God who reveals* such an “obedience of faith,” by which *the whole person* freely *abandons himself or herself to God*, showing him “full submission of his intellect and will,” and consenting voluntarily to the “truth revealed by him” (cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 5).

In knowing through faith, human beings accept as truth all of the supernatural and salvific content of Revelation; nonetheless, this fact *introduces them* at the same time into a *profoundly personal relationship* with the very God who reveals himself. If the proper content of Revelation is the “self-communication” of God, then the response of faith is correct to the extent to which human beings, accepting as truth that salvific content, at the same time “abandon themselves completely to God.” Only a complete *abandonment to God* on the part of human beings constitutes *an adequate response*.

MARCH 27, 1985

Faith in God, Faith in Christ, Faith in the Holy Spirit

*Rediscover the foundations of your faith; even more, pray to the Holy Spirit
to diffuse it within you.*

*Be happy in and proud of your faith! God, who has raised his Son Jesus,
wants you as disciples in peace and joy.*

APRIL 4, 1986



Speaking of God means addressing a sublime and boundless theme, mysterious and captivating.

Why speak of God today?

Who is God? Can we know him in a truthful manner in our human condition? Who are we, creatures, before God?

With the questions there have always arisen many and sometimes tortuous difficulties: If God exists, then why is there so much evil in the world? Why do the impious flourish, while the just are trodden down? Does not the omnipotence of God end up crushing our freedom and responsibility?

We speak of God *because this is an irrepressible need of human beings.*

JULY 3, 1985

When we ask ourselves, “Why do we believe in God?” the first answer is that this is our faith: God has revealed himself to humanity, he has entered into contact with human beings. The supreme Revelation of God has come to us in Jesus Christ, God incarnate. We believe in God because God has allowed us to discover him as the supreme being, the great “existent.”

Nonetheless, this faith in a God who reveals himself also finds support *in the reasoning of our intelligence*. When we reflect, we realize that there is no lack of *proofs of the existence of God*. These have been elaborated by thinkers under the form of philosophical demonstrations, according to a sequence of rigorous logic. But these can also take on a simpler form, and as such are accessible to all human beings who seek to understand the meaning of the world around them.

JULY 10, 1985

Faith in God—believe it—does not distance you from human beings, it does not remove you from contemporary problems: on the contrary, it makes you more aware and responsible. Your “presence” with regard to humanity will be all the more valid and authentic the more you are centered upon God. It is only by remaining rooted and founded in him that you will be able to give life to true human and Christian communities, and thus proclaim the Gospel of hope to your peers: in such a way your contribution, wherever you may be called to carry out your work, will be truly original and incisive.

We know that the Christian faith, in whatever time and under whatever latitude, has an unmistakable characteristic: charity. I mean effective charity, eager and attentive toward those who are poor, those who are needy, those who have less than we do, those who are suffering.

APRIL 2, 1984

God is the future of the human person and of the world. If humanity loses the meaning of God, it will close itself to the future and inevitably lose the perspective of its pilgrim journey in time. Why birth, why death? Why sacrifice, why suffering?

To these questions, Christianity offers a satisfying answer. For this reason, Christ is the hope of humanity. He is the true meaning of our present, because he is our sure future.

ANGELUS

DECEMBER 1, 2002

This is the joy that comes from faith. We do not belong to “no one.” God has created us, we belong only to him. We are his people. The Good Shepherd, Christ crucified and risen, bears witness that we are for him, and for the Father. He bears witness that the Lord is good: eternal is his mercy (cf. Ps 99[100]:5).

This is the valid reason for Paschal joy. May each one of us and the whole Church live out this joy with trust. In the mystery of the Good Shepherd, may we find *the light* that shows the way in the darkness. May we discover always anew *the strength and power* in order to carry out our pilgrimage, following the path of the risen Christ.

APRIL 16, 1989

Today there is much talk about human rights. In many countries they are violated. There is never any talk, however, about the rights of God. And yet, *human rights and the rights of God go hand in hand*. Wherever God and his laws are not respected, the human person will not be respected.

Our life flows smoothly only when our relations with God are in order.

Today as well, this is a matter of giving to God that which belongs to God. Only then will there be given to the human person that which belongs to the human person.

Let us seek in God the source and center of our lives.

Let us seek to construct our lives and the world around us by drawing strength from this same source.

Holiness is not reserved for a few privileged souls; we are all called to holiness, everyone, without any exception.

MAY 3, 1987

In the modern world man runs the risk of limiting progress to the horizontal dimension. But what becomes of man if he does not also lift his mind toward the Absolute? A “new humanity” without God is destined to end quickly, as the blood-stained footprints left by the history of the ideologies and totalitarian regimes of the last century show us.

For this reason, the Christians of the third millennium, more than ever have the “wonderful and demanding task of becoming its ‘reflection.’ This is a daunting task if we consider our human weakness, which so often renders us opaque and full of shadows. But it is a task which we can accomplish if we turn to the light of Christ and open ourselves to the grace which makes us a new creation” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 54).

SEPTEMBER 3, 2001

God, who has revealed himself to human beings, remains for them in this life an *inscrutable mystery*. This is the mystery of faith. The first article of the symbol “I believe in God” expresses the first and fundamental truth of faith, which is at the same time the first and fundamental *mystery of faith*. God, who has revealed himself to human beings, remains for the human intellect someone who is *simultaneously known and incomprehensible*. In the course of their earthly lives, human beings enter into contact with the God of Revelation in the “obscurity of faith.” This is explained in a whole thread of classical and modern theology that insists upon the ineffability of God and finds particularly profound—and sometimes even painful—confirmation in the experience of the great mystics. But precisely this *obscurity of faith*—as St. John of the Cross affirms—is the light that inevitably leads to God (cf. *Ascent of Mount Carmel* II, 9, 3).

This God is, according to the words of St. Paul, “the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see” (1 Tm 6:15-16).

The obscurity of faith unfailingly accompanies the earthly pilgrimage of the human spirit toward God, in the anticipation of opening onto the light of glory only in the future life, in eternity. “At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face” (1 Cor 13:12).

“*In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.*” “In your light we see light” (Ps 35[36]:10).

AUGUST 28, 1985

God is ineffable and incomprehensible, God is in his essence an inscrutable mystery. With regard to the Most Holy Trinity, in which is expressed the intimate life of the God of our faith, this must be repeated and asserted with an even greater power of conviction. The unity of the divinity in the Trinity of Persons is truly an ineffable and inscrutable mystery! “If you understand it, it is not God.”

The holy Church, in its Trinitarian faith, feels united to all of those who confess the One God. Faith in the Trinity does not undermine the truth of the One God; on the contrary, it highlights its richness, its mysterious content, its intimate life.

NOVEMBER 27, 1985

“You have faith in God; have faith also in me” (Jn 14:1): a request that only God can make.

Faith refers to an invisible reality, which is beyond the senses and experience and surpasses the limits of the human intellect itself (*argumentum non apparentium*: “evidence of things not seen” [cf. Heb 11:1]); it refers, as St. Paul says, to “what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart,” which God has prepared for those who love him (cf. 1 Cor 2:9). Jesus demands such faith.

It is certain, however, that the vocation to Christian faith and love is universal and obligatory: faith in the word of Jesus, love for God above all things and for one’s neighbor as oneself, in part because “whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

OCTOBER 28, 1987

In pronouncing the words “I believe in God,” we express in the first place *the conviction that God exists*. According to the teaching of the Church, the truth about the existence of God is accessible even to human reason alone, if it is free from prejudice, as testified to by passages of the book of Wisdom (13:1-9) and of the Letter to the Romans (cf. 1:19-20). These speak of the knowledge of God as Creator (or first cause). This truth also appears in other pages of Sacred Scripture. The invisible God becomes *in a certain sense “visible” through his works*.

When we say “I believe in God,” our words have the precise *character of “confession.”* In confessing, we respond to God who has revealed himself. In confessing, we become participants in the truth that God has revealed and express it as a matter of conviction. The one who reveals himself does not only make it possible for us to know that he exists, but he also permits us to know *who* he is, and even *how* he is. Thus the self-revelation of God leads us to the question about the essence of God: *Who is God?*

JULY 31, 1985

Faith in Christ is an essential condition of salvation, of eternal life. It is faith in the only-begotten Son—consubstantial with the Father—in which is manifested the love of the Father.

All that Jesus did and taught, all that the Apostles preached and bore witness to and the Evangelists wrote, all that the Church preserves and repeats of their teaching must serve faith, in order that, believing, one may reach salvation.

OCTOBER 21, 1987

Christ is the center of Christian faith, the faith which the Church proclaims today, as she has always done, to all men and women: God became man. “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). The eyes of faith see in Jesus Christ man as he could be and as God wishes him to be. At the same time, Jesus reveals to us the love of the Father.

AUGUST 19, 1989

In the face of Jesus, we cannot content ourselves with simple human approval, as legitimate and valuable as it may be, nor is it sufficient to consider him only as a figure worthy of historical, theological, spiritual, or social interest, or as a source of artistic inspiration. Around Christ we often see the undulation, even among Christians, of shadows of ignorance, or the even more painful shadows of misunderstanding when not of outright disbelief. The danger is always present of appealing to the “Gospel of Jesus” without really knowing its greatness and radicality, and without living that which is affirmed there. How many are those who reduce the Gospel to their own stature, and make a more comfortable Jesus, denying his transcendent divinity, or trivializing his real and historical humanity, or manipulating the integrity of his message, in particular not taking into account the sacrifice of the Cross that dominates his life and teaching, nor the Church that he has instituted as his “sacrament” in history.

JANUARY 7, 1987

The Christ, true God and true man. This is the faith of the Church.

The Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, he died and was buried...

The Christ: on the third day *he rose* from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, from where *he shall come to judge the living and the dead*.

This is the faith of the Apostles. This is the faith of Peter. *This faith is the foundation on which is built the Church of God upon the earth*.

In this *changing society*, your faith, dear brothers and sisters, must *learn to express itself and to live*.

Your faith must keep itself active and strong; it must become ever more personal, ever more rooted in prayer and in the experience of the sacraments; it must reach the living God, in his son Jesus Christ, the Savior, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in the Church. This is the faith that you must deepen with joy, such as to live it and to bear witness to it in daily life and in the new sectors of culture. This is in reality the grace that we must ask.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1984

Faith in Jesus Christ died and risen for us is a value that has no comparison, because it gives a spiritual meaning and power to our lives. It is also an indestructible guarantee of our communion of prayer and of affection with the loved ones who have already left us. Faith is a gift of the Spirit, which we must guard with love. I hope that this may grow and develop in all of you, in the religious atmosphere of your homes, in the love of your families, in the expectations of your children, in the smiles of your grandchildren.

MARCH 1, 1986

Seek Christ; trust in him and welcome him into the center of your lives; grow in his friendship. You, who feel the urgency of always having new experiences, seek this decisive experience: *the experience of the Lord*.

If your faith is not based on this experience, how will you be able to give an account of your hope to yourselves and to others? How will you be able to overcome the doubts and crises that are proper to your age? Open the doors of your hearts to the experience of the Lord. *When he is present*, the mists of doubt and fear disappear, and *into the heart returns joy*.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1989

Believe in Christ with firm and sure faith! There is a great competition today of ideas, programs, ideological currents. We must confront this situation with respect, but also with courage, committing ourselves to transmitting also to others the values in which we believe.

A purely traditional, sentimental, emotional religious devotion cannot stand today; what is needed is a serious, deep, well-founded faith, and this requires an enlightened doctrinal formation, the fruit of in-depth catechesis.

Live in Christ with joy, and bear witness to Christ with courage!

MAY 30, 1987

Yes, “all seek you,” O Jesus Christ!

Many seek you *directly*, calling on you by name, with faith, hope, and charity.

There are some who seek you *indirectly*: through others.

And there are others who seek you without knowing it...

And there are even those who *seek you* even while denying this search.

In spite of this, all seek you, they seek you before all because *you seek them first*, because *you became man for all*, in the womb of the Virgin Mary; because *you have redeemed all* at the price of your Cross.

In this way *you have opened*, in the intricate and impracticable paths of human hearts and human destiny, *the way*.

To you, who are the way, the truth, and the life, do we turn in *this prayer* through the heart of your Mother, the Virgin, Mary Most Holy.

FEBRUARY 10, 1985

Let us keep our eyes fixed *on Jesus*, “*the leader and perfecter of faith*,” as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews says of him (12:2). Being Christian means precisely keeping one’s eyes fixed on Christ as on one’s guide in faith. He began to lead us on this path of faith when he became man, and he leads us on it with the wisdom and simplicity, always alive, of the word of his Gospel, interwoven with the Paschal mystery of his Death and Resurrection. This wonderful guide remains forever, enlivening human hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit, and making of them a community of the one People of God, which, in all the earth, from east to west, does not cease to aspire to the fulfillment of the mysteries and promises of faith. Behold, the Christ of our souls! The Christ of the Church! The Christ of the history of humanity!

AUGUST 17, 1980

Faith in Christ, which obliges us to love God and to love others as our brothers and sisters, teaches us to see the latter of these in all the profundity of their transcendent value. It must therefore be faith that gives the impulse to work on behalf of the comprehensive promotion of humanity, beginning with the clear identification of their condition as children of God and of the Church, without allowing this vision to be obscured and without resorting to ideological premises that are contrary to it.

This is the substratum *of the social teaching of the Church*. Christians must direct themselves to its faithful application as a concrete path toward the solution of the many problems that afflict our society. In order to do this, it will be necessary to spread this teaching and to provide a good formation for those who present it with fidelity. This is a great service to the men and women of today.

This faith must lead to justice and peace. Enough with the divorce between faith and life.

MARCH 7, 1983

Professors, researchers, university students, *if the human person is the question, Christ is the answer*. If life is a problem, it is not an impenetrable enigma, but a mystery of love to be adored. Through his life and death imbued with infinite love, Christ, Son of the Virgin Mary, illuminated the deepest aspects of our existence, he, one of billions of beings, and nonetheless the only.

MAY 20, 1985

He is “sign of contradiction.” But he is also the “light of revelation to the Gentiles.” He is the “light of the world”

- By his birth in poverty on that night in Bethlehem
- By the Gospel of the Eight Beatitudes
- By his Cross and the Resurrection

Truly he has been made like us, his brothers and sisters. He has been made like the sons and daughters of this ancient land.

He is able to help all of us. He takes care of all, just as he takes care of the offspring of Abraham.

Jesus Christ is the light that reveals the thoughts of our hearts. Jesus Christ is the truth that liberates. Let us welcome him. Let us welcome him with faith and with love.

FEBRUARY 2, 1986

“Being Christ means believing and growing.” Being Christ also means believing in him through the preaching of the Church, in his redemptive Death and his Resurrection, in his glorification by the Father and in his constant presence among us. Jesus himself reassures us: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). Faith does not so much refer to an event in the past as to the Lord who lives and is present among us. It means above all friendship and community of life with Christ. A union and an intimate familiarity with him, in which the Christ must develop ever more profoundly. *Being Christ* thus means believing and growing at the same time; it means being near to Christ, preserving his friendship and thus conforming to his life; it also means, however, becoming ever more intimate with Christ, knowing him better and better and continuing firmly on the journey of love for and fidelity to him.

Having Christ in faith as friend and companion of life and growing ever more in intimacy with him, this, dear young friends, is your great task and your great vocation, which must make you happy, influence your lives and your everyday activity. At the same time, this leads to your responsibility toward your neighbors, especially those who are in particular need of your help. Precisely in the poor and the suffering are you able to encounter Christ himself, and the good that you do for them he will have done for Christ. From the Christian vocation itself stems, finally, your duty toward the great demands of society and for a more just and better world of tomorrow.

APRIL 4, 1986

Faith in Christ does not mean only accepting his truth, but referring to his Person, welcomed and loved. In this sense, *from faith stems fidelity*, and fidelity is the proof of love. This is a matter, in fact, of a love that is prompted by Christ, and, through him, reaches God in order to love him “with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength,” as stated by the first and greatest commandment of the ancient law (cf. Dt 6:5-6), confirmed and corroborated by Jesus himself (cf., e.g., Mk 12:28-30).

JANUARY 8, 1992

Christ is not a symbol of some vague religious reality, rather he is the concrete point where, in the person of the Son, God makes our humanity completely his own. With Christ, “the Eternal enters time, the Whole lies hidden in the part, God takes on a human face” (*Fides et Ratio*, no. 12). This “self-emptying” of God, even to the “scandal” of the Cross (cf. Phil 2:7), can seem foolishness to that reason which is enamored of itself. In fact, this self-emptying is “the power and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23-24) for those who are open to the unexpectedness of his love.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2000

For the one who meets Christ, there is no other alternative: either he recognizes his need of him and of his light, or he chooses to do without. In the case of doing without Christ, the same presumption prevents both the one who thinks he is just before God and the one who considers himself an atheist, from being open to authentic conversion.

Dear brothers and sisters, may no one close his soul to Christ! He gives to the one who accepts him the light of faith, the light that can transform the heart, and, consequently, mentalities, social, political, and economic situations dominated by sin. "...I do believe, Lord!" (Jn 9:38). With the man born blind, may each of us be ready humbly to profess our own attachment to him.

MARCH 10, 2002

As I wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “The men and women of our own day often perhaps unconsciously ask believers not only to ‘speak’ of Christ, but in a certain sense to ‘show’ him to them” (no. 16). Doesn’t this request coincide with the project of life that St. Dominic expressed so effectively: “*contemplata aliis tradere*” (to hand on to others what contemplation has taught)? Only those who have had an experience of God can speak of him convincingly to others.

FEBRUARY 15, 2002

Before being a doctrine, Christianity is an “event,” or rather *a Person*: it is Jesus of Nazareth. It is he who is the heart of the Christian faith. In order to enjoy his intimacy, countless numbers of saints, of monks and ascetics, have left everything. But Christ can also be encountered on the roads of the world. The great Dostoevsky, in one of his letters, recalling the incredulity and doubt that mark so many moments of our lives, offers this touching testimony: “It is for those moments that I have composed a creed: to believe that there is nothing more beautiful, more profound, more lovable, more reasonable, and more perfect than Christ, and that not only is there nothing, but—I say this to myself with jealous love—that there can be nothing” (Letter to Madame Voti Visine, February 20, 1854). In his turn, a recent Russian thinker, Semyon Frank, reflecting on the enigma of suffering, writes: “The idea of a God who descended into the world, who suffers voluntarily and takes part in human and cosmic sufferings, the idea of a God-man who suffers, is the only theodicy possible, the only persuasive justification of God.”

SEPTEMBER 15, 1996

It is Jesus who takes the initiative. When we have to do with him, the question is always turned upside down: from questioners, we become questioned; “searchers,” we discover that we are “sought”; he, indeed, has always loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:10). This is the fundamental dimension of the encounter: we are not dealing with something, but with Someone, with the “Living One.” Christians are not the disciples of a system of philosophy: they are men and women who, in faith, have experienced the encounter with Christ (cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4).

We are living in an era of great changes: the rapid decline of ideologies that seemed to promise a long resistance to the wear and tear of time; the tracing out on the planet of new confines and frontiers. Humanity often finds itself uncertain, bewildered, and anxious (cf. Mt 9:36). But the word of God knows no decline; throughout history and among changing events, it remains firm and gives light (cf. Mt 24:35). *The faith of the Church is founded on Jesus Christ, the one Savior of the world, yesterday and today and for ever.*

AUGUST 15, 1996

Faith in Christ is directed to man's freedom. The urgency of missionary activity derives from the *radical newness of life* brought by Christ and lived by his followers. This new life is a gift from God, and people are asked to accept and develop it, if they wish to realize the fullness of their vocation in conformity to Christ. The whole New Testament is a hymn to the new life of those who believe in Christ and live in his Church. Salvation in Christ, as witnessed to and proclaimed by the Church, is God's self-communication: "It is love which not only creates the good, but also grants participation in the very life of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For he who loves desires to give himself."

God offers mankind this newness of life. "Can one reject Christ and everything that he has brought about in the history of mankind? Of course one can. Man is free. He can say 'no' to God. He can say 'no' to Christ. But the fundamental question remains: Is it legitimate to do this? And what would make it legitimate?"

ENCYCLICAL *REDEMPTORIS MISSIO*, NO. 7

That Jesus of Nazareth who habitually called himself the “Son of Man” is the Christ (meaning the Messiah), he is the Son of God, he is the Lord (*Kyrios*), he is the Savior: *this is the faith of the Apostles, which has been at the foundation of the Church from the beginning.*

The Church has *guarded* this faith with the greatest love and veneration, handing it down to the new generations of disciples and followers of Christ under the direction of the Spirit of Truth. It has *taught and defended* this faith, seeking in every age not only to preserve intact its essential revealed content, but also to *explore it* constantly and to *explain it* according to the measure of the needs and possibilities of human beings. This is the task that it is called to carry out until the time of the definitive coming of its Savior and Lord.

MARCH 2, 1988

How much the people of today have need of the explicit encounter with Christ! How much those who seek, who doubt and question, have need to discover the full truth of the Paschal reality of the Lord, the full truth of his life, his Death, and his Resurrection. Because of this, the world needs our Christian testimony! Even if people often live as if God did not exist, deep inside themselves and in their search for happiness and protection they always have a yearning for him. Your witness in family life, in the realm of work, in school, in the offices and factories, in public and political life will be decisive in order that the liberating message of Christ may also reach the people of today who live side by side with you, in your environment. In him, all of the areas of our lives and our society can become truer and richer. Through the credible witness of Christians there could be, after some tragic fractures between the Church and the world, between faith and reason, a new encounter between the Gospel and culture, precisely in this Europe that has clearly grown old.

MAY 3, 1987

The faith of the People of God needs to be enlivened and fostered continuously in obedience to the Gospel, with the procedure described by the Apostle: mission, proclamation, acceptance, and personal and committed adherence (cf. Rom 10:14-16); it needs to be animated by the “novelty” of Jesus Christ. With him is born the “new man,” called to live in family with all men, to holiness and grace translated into truth and life, in the construction of justice, love, and peace. And it is through “new men” that a new society must be, in a climate of solidarity and fraternity, illuminated by the sun of charity and continually purified and refreshed by the sweet breeze of the practice of the Beatitudes.

JULY 6, 1987

“Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (Jn 20:29).

It is this kind of faith that we must renew, in the wake of the countless Christian generations that for two thousand years have confessed Christ, the invisible Lord, even to the point of martyrdom. We must apply to ourselves, as countless others have already done, the ancient words of the First Letter of Peter:

“Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him” (1 Pt 1:8). This is genuine faith: absolute dedication to things that are not seen (cf. Heb 11:1) but are capable of filling and ennobling an entire life (cf. Heb 11:13). The ideals that you profess and serve are also invisible. But if you focus on Jesus Christ, instead of abstract concepts of duty, law, and service, then those same ideals receive a name and you have an extra reason to give generously of yourselves for the good of your brothers and sisters.

APRIL 9, 1983

In a world fraught with skepticism and confusion, it may seem to some that the light of Christ has been obscured. Indeed, modern societies and cultures are often marked by a secularism that easily leads to a loss of the sense of God, and without God the proper sense of man is soon lost as well. “When God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible” (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36): people are no longer able to see themselves as “mysteriously different” from other earthly creatures and lose sight of the transcendent character of human existence. This is the context in which the liberating truth of Christ must resound: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). We are speaking here of the fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of earthly existence and which forms the basis of the Gospel we preach, the “Gospel of life.” In fact, it is the profound and persuasive echo of this sublime truth in the heart of every person—believer and non-believer alike—that “marvelously fulfills all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them” (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 2).

APRIL 5, 2003

The tragedy is that Christ, the Light of the world, is unknown to many, by others he is not accepted or even rejected. In our society, unfortunately there is a widespread culture imbued with selfishness and closed to the knowledge and love of God. This culture, by refusing *de facto* a sound reference to divine transcendence, gives rise to confusion, dissatisfaction, indifference, loneliness, hatred, and violence. How urgent it is then to offer a joyful witness to the one message of salvation, ancient and ever new, of the Gospel of life and light, of hope and love!

JANUARY 5, 2003

How can the Church be an even more effective instrument of Christ? (cf. *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 4). Even where the life of the Church is filled with signs of growth, no effort can be spared in taking effective pastoral initiatives to make the Lord better known and loved. Indeed, families and communities, continuing to search for meaning in their lives, look to see “faith in action.” This demands that you, as teachers of the faith and heralds of the Word (cf. *Pastores Gregis*, no. 26), preach with clarity and precision how “faith in fact has the force to shape culture itself by penetrating it to its very core” (*Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 20). Anchored in the Christian tradition, and alert to the signs of contemporary cultural shifts, your episcopal ministry will thus be a sign of hope and direction for all.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2004

Through the gift of faith we have met the One who introduces himself with these surprising words: “I am the truth” (Jn 14:6). Jesus is the truth of the universe and of history, the meaning and the destiny of human existence, the foundation of all reality! It is your responsibility, you who have welcomed this Truth as the vocation and certitude of your lives, to demonstrate its reasonableness in the University environment and in your work there. The question that then arises is: how deeply does the truth of Christ affect your studies, research, knowledge of reality, and the comprehensive education of the human person? It may happen that, even among those who profess to be Christians, some will behave in the University as if God did not exist. Christianity is not a mere subjective religious preference, which is ultimately irrational, and relegated to the private sphere. As Christians we are duty-bound to bear witness to what the Second Vatican Council affirmed in *Gaudium et Spes*: “For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God’s design for man’s total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human” (no. 11). We must demonstrate that faith and reason are not irreconcilable, but that, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth” (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, Intr.)

MARCH 25, 2004

Those who approach Jesus with a heart free of prejudice can quite easily come to have faith because Jesus himself has already seen them and loved them first. The most sublime aspect of human dignity is precisely man's vocation to communicate with God in a profound exchange of glances that is life transforming. In order to see Jesus, we first need to let him look at us!

The desire to see Jesus dwells deep in the heart of each man and each woman. My dear young people, allow Jesus to gaze into your eyes so that the desire to see the Light, and to experience the splendor of the Truth, may grow within you. Whether we are aware of it or not, God has created us because he loves us and so that we in turn may love him. This is the reason for the unquenchable nostalgia for God that man preserves in his heart: "Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me" (Ps 27:8-9). That Face—we know—was revealed to us by God in Jesus Christ.

FEBRUARY 22, 2004

Christianity is not simply a doctrine: it is an encounter in faith with God made present in our history through the incarnation of Jesus.

Try by every means to make this encounter possible, and look toward Jesus who is passionately seeking you. Seek him with the eyes of the flesh through the events of life and in the faces of others; but seek him too with the eyes of the soul through prayer and meditation on the word of God, because “the contemplation of Christ’s face cannot fail to be inspired by all that we are told about him in Sacred Scripture” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 17).

To see Jesus, to contemplate his Face, is an unquenchable desire, but it is a desire that man unfortunately may also deform. This is what happens with sin, because it is the very essence of sin to draw our eyes away from the Creator and to turn them toward what he has created.

Those “Greeks” in search of the truth would not have been able to approach Christ if their desire, animated by a free and voluntary act, had not been expressed through a clear decision: “We wish to see Jesus.” To be truly free means having the strength to choose the One for whom we were created and accepting his lordship over our lives. You perceive it in the depths of your heart: all that is good on earth, all professional success, even the human love that you dream of, can never fully satisfy your deepest and most intimate desires. Only an encounter with Jesus can give full meaning to your lives: “For you made us for yourself, and our heart finds no peace until it rests in you” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, book 1, chapter 1). Do not let yourselves be distracted from this search. Persevere in it because it is your fulfillment and your joy that is at stake.

FEBRUARY 22, 2004

Christian hope is based on faith in Jesus Christ and on the gift of his love. By “faith, [which] is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), we strive toward the fulfillment of the promises of the Lord. This hope “responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity” (CCC, no. 1818).

POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
A NEW HOPE FOR LEBANON, NO. 28

If they are clearly and solidly presented, the gifts of faith will effectively help to make it understood that belonging to Christ implies a rule of life, a law that is liberating rather than constraining. The deep bond that exists between faith and morals escapes many of our contemporaries, who remember only the prohibitions, as a good many of your reports show. The discerning faithful should be enabled firmly *to grasp the positive and vital meaning of the Church's moral teaching*. This is what I felt had to be explained in the Encyclicals *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*, in particular.

Day by day, it is necessary for Catholics to practice *enlightened discernment* regarding the opinions whose influence is spreading and of which they must remain free. Whether it is a question of personal or social morals, a disciple of Christ must be able to recognize where the right way, the truth about man, and respect for life truly lie. What is known as the evolution of morality cannot in itself reform norms of life based on the natural law that every person of good will can learn with his own right reason, and the Gospel. What civil law authorizes does not necessarily correspond to the truth of the human vocation, nor to the good which every person must try to accomplish in his personal choices and in his conduct toward others.

FEBRUARY 1, 1997

Many people, reflecting on the state of our world, show dismay and sometimes even anxiety. They are overwhelmed at the way individuals and groups behave, for it reveals a disconcerting *absense of values*. And our thoughts naturally turn to recent news reports that cause a chilling *sense of emptiness* in those who watch them attentively.

How can we fail to ask ourselves about their causes; how can we not feel the need for someone to help us decipher the mystery of life and enable us to look to the future with hope?

In the Bible, those who have this mission are prophets. They are people moved by the Spirit, who do not speak in their own name but in God's.

To his contemporaries, Jesus also appeared as a prophet; impressed, they recognized him as a "prophet mighty in deed and word" (Lk 24:19). By his life and especially by his Death and Resurrection, he was accredited as the prophet *par excellence*, being the Son of God himself. This is what the Letter to the Hebrews says: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb 1:1-2).

JANUARY 26, 1997

“Who is Jesus for the people of the twenty-first century? Who is Jesus for each one of us?”

Dearest brothers and sisters! May the response of Peter be ours as well: let us profess with joy that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the divine Word who became man in order to redeem all of humanity. *The world needs Christ*. The people of our time not rarely are aware of a void and live in disquiet. They seek certainties and thirst for adequate responses to their profound existential questions. In Christ, only in him, can they find peace and authentic satisfaction for all of their deepest aspirations. *Christ knows the heart of man*.

Faith in Christ logically implies imitating him. All are called to follow him by bearing their own cross: the intellectual cross that makes reason humbly bow before the mysteries of God; the cross of the moral law, according to which one must observe all of the commandments; the cross of one's duty, of contingent situations, of sufferings and trials, which require patience and trust in Providence. We must never forget that “one who loses one's life for Christ will save it.” Only Jesus has words of “eternal life.”

JUNE 25, 1995

Nothing helps us to face the conflict between life and death in which we are immersed more than faith in the Son of God who became man and came among men so that they might “have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10): it is faith in the risen Lord who has overcome death; it is faith in the blood of Christ whose voice is more eloquent than that of Abel, and which gives hope and restores to mankind its true image.

JUNE 11, 1995

In Christ, religion is no longer a “blind search for God” (cf. Acts 17:27) but the *response of faith* to God who reveals himself. It is a response in which man speaks to God as his Creator and Father, a response made possible by that one Man who is also the consubstantial Word in whom God speaks to each individual person and by whom each individual person is enabled to respond to God. What is more, in this Man all creation responds to God. Jesus Christ is the new beginning of everything. In him all things come into their own; they are taken up and given back to the Creator from whom they first came. *Christ is thus the fulfillment of the yearning of all the world’s religions and, as such, he is their sole and definitive completion.* Just as God in Christ speaks to humanity of himself, so in Christ all humanity and the whole of creation speaks of itself to God—indeed, it gives itself to God. Everything thus returns to its origin. *Jesus Christ is the recapitulation of everything* (cf. Eph 1:10) and at the same time the fulfillment of all things in God: a fulfillment which is the glory of God. The religion founded upon Jesus Christ is a *religion of glory*; it is a newness of life for the praise of the glory of God (cf. Eph 1:12). All creation is in reality a manifestation of his glory. In particular, man (*vivens homo*) is the epiphany of God’s glory, man who is called to live by the fullness of life in God.

One can never really reach Jesus except by the path of faith, on a journey of which the stages seem to be indicated to us by the Gospel itself in the well-known scene at Caesarea Philippi (cf. Mt 16:13-20). Engaging in a kind of first evaluation of his mission, Jesus asks his disciples what “people” think of him, and they answer him: “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Mt 16:14). A lofty response to be sure, but still a long way—by far—from the truth. The crowds are able to sense a definitely exceptional religious dimension to this rabbi who speaks in such a spellbinding way, but they are not able to put him above those men of God who had distinguished the history of Israel. Jesus is really far different! It is precisely this further step of awareness, concerning as it does the deeper level of his being, which he expects from those who are close to him: “But who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15). Only the faith proclaimed by Peter, and with him by the Church in every age, truly goes to the heart, and touches the depth of the mystery: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

“We wish to see Jesus” (Jn 12:21). This request, addressed to the Apostle Philip by some Greeks who had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover, echoes spiritually in our ears too during this Jubilee Year. Like those pilgrims of two thousand years ago, the men and women of our own day—often perhaps unconsciously—ask believers not only to “speak” of Christ, but in a certain sense to “show” him to them. And is it not the Church’s task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium?

Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first *contemplated his face*.

NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE, NO. 16

Live your life within the meaning of Easter! Christians, in fact, must distinguish themselves precisely through this Paschal sense of life and history. And what does this mean?

It means being convinced that the Resurrection of Jesus is the decisive and determining event of all human history, and therefore of our existence, because it gives it the guarantee of a transcendent and external significance. It is difficult sometimes to see the light beyond the darkness! And yet Christians are the ones who, in the night, wait trustingly for the smile of the dawn; they are the ones who, beyond the darkness and anguish of Good Friday, glimpse the joy and glory of Easter Sunday! Christ is risen, and therefore his word is divine: *God loves us, humanity is saved, history is redeemed!* Carry in your lives and in your surroundings, in the family and at work, in the moments of serenity and in the places of suffering, this Paschal meaning of salvation and of true hope; this is what the modern world awaits and desires from the Christian!

APRIL 12, 1980

It was [Christ] who *gained our salvation in an absolute way precisely through the Cross*. Precisely because of the fact that he accepted the testament of Gethsemane and Calvary. Precisely because of the fact that he was bound, tried, scourged, crowned with thorns. Precisely because of the fact that he was condemned, that he fell beneath the weight of the Cross. And what can we say about the terrible torment of the agony on the Cross? Let us follow the traces of his sufferings, let us dwell with the utmost attention on every word spoken by him: in the Upper Room, in the garden of Gethsemane, before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, and finally on the Cross. There exists in all that an amazing consistency: the unity of testimony, of mission.

“Auctor fidei nostrae.”

It is this very abasement, this emptying: *“kenosis,”* that speaks to us. He wins our hearts because of the truth he taught. Perhaps he would not have won them if he had not confirmed it with this witness. We believe that he is the Son of God, precisely because in this way, right to the end, he revealed himself as the Son of man.

He spoke to us of God, and perhaps with that one sentence of the prayer at Gethsemane, or with the seven words he spoke on the Cross, he told us who God is even more than in the whole of the Gospel.

The revelation of God becomes penetrating precisely because of the fact that “though he [Christ] was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:68).

The penetrating revelation of justice and, at the same time, of love, which is mercy! Justice, love, mercy would have remained concepts without an ultimate and definitive content, if there had not been this Passion and this Cross.

The revelation of this extreme “weakness” of God was necessary in order that it would be possible to manifest what his power is. It was necessary that “the death of God” should take place in the history of mankind in order that he might continually remain in our souls as source of the Life “welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14).

Let us elevate history by means of faith in Jesus Christ!

For what reason did God become incarnate? Why did Jesus Christ, the word of God, wish to take his place in our human history? Only to save it, by revealing the transcendent and ultramundane values of all our actions. This is the truth that makes our existence so sublime: we are destined for God, for eternity, for eternal happiness which depends on our free choices. Jesus came to bear witness to truth and to guarantee it (Jn 18:37).

In the introduction to his famous *Life of Jesus*, the well-known French writer François Mauriac wrote: “It was necessary for God to immerse himself in humanity and, at a precise moment of history, at a determined point of the globe, for a human being, made of flesh and blood, to utter certain words, carry out certain acts, in order that I should throw myself on my knees... I believe only in what I touch, only in what I see, only in what is incorporated in my substance; and that is why I have faith in Christ” (F. Mauriac, *La vita di Gesù*, Ed. Mondadori, Milan, 1943).

To save man it is necessary to have faith in Christ! To elevate history, it is necessary to save men! And Christ says to us: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). He alone has words of eternal life! He alone is man’s salvation.

MAY 19, 1979

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the community professes its faith and applies the truth of faith to life. On the one hand, there is the effort of the whole Church to better understand Revelation, the object of faith: a systematic study of Scripture and a continuous reflection or meditation on the profound meaning and on the value of the word of God. On the other hand, the Church bears witness to the faith with its own life, showing the consequences and applications of the doctrine revealed and the superior value that results from it for human behavior. By teaching the precepts promulgated by Christ, it follows the way that he opened and manifests the excellence of the Gospel message.

Every Christian must “acknowledge Christ before others” (cf. Mt 10:32) in union with the whole Church, and have among nonbelievers “irreproachable conduct” so that they may come to faith (cf. 1 Pt 2:12).

By these means, indicated by the Council, is developed and transmitted, with the “communitarian” witness of the Church, that “sense of the faith” through which the People of God participates in the prophetic office of Christ. “By this sense of faith,” we read in *Lumen Gentium*, “which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God’s People accepts not the word of men but the very word of God (cf. 1 Thes 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life. All this it does under the lead of a sacred teaching authority to which it loyally defers” (no. 12).

MAY 13, 1992

Everything takes place in faith and through faith, under the action of the Spirit, as it says in the Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*: the *Mysterium Christi* in its totality demands faith, because it is this that appropriately introduces human beings into the reality of the mystery revealed. Guidance to the fullness of truth is realized, therefore, in faith and through faith, which is a work of the Spirit of truth and is the fruit of his action in human beings. The Holy Spirit must be in this the supreme guide of human beings, *the light of the human spirit*.

MAY 17, 1989

Faith in the one and triune God entered right from the beginning into the tradition of the life of the Church and of Christians. As a result, the whole *liturgy* was—and is— Trinitarian by nature, in that it is an expression of the divine economy. It must be emphasized that the understanding of the supreme mystery of the Most Holy Trinity has been aided by *faith in redemption*, meaning faith in the salvific work of Christ. This manifests the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, who in the bosom of the eternal Trinity proceeds “from the Father,” revealing the *Trinitarian economy* present in redemption and sanctification. The Holy Trinity is proclaimed first of all through soteriology, which means the understanding of the “economy of salvation” that Christ proclaims and realizes in his messianic mission. This understanding leads to the understanding of the “immanent” Trinity, the mystery of the intimate life of God.

OCTOBER 9, 1985

This faith is, in the first place, *faith in the Father*, the giver of all goodness and creator of all that exists, the one who can do everything, knows everything, and sees everything. The merciful God who wills that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tm 2:4); who does not wish the death of sinners, but that they should convert and live (cf. Ez 33:11), but who will give to all according to their works (cf. Mt 25:31-46) and to whom is due honor and glory (cf. Heb 13:21).

Faith in the Son, conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit, who for us men and for our salvation descended from heaven and became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, as we profess in the Creed, who went through the world doing good (cf. Acts 10:18), who had compassion on the crowds (cf. Mt 9:36), who solemnly promulgated the commandment of love (cf. Jn 13:13), who built the Church upon Peter (cf. Mt 16:18), who in dying on the Cross ransomed us and opened for us the gates of eternal life, and who, rising again by his own power, ascended into heaven as the first fruits of those who have died (cf. Col 1:18), from where he sent the Holy Spirit whom he had promised to us (cf. Lk 24:49).

Faith in the Holy Spirit, whom we adore together with the Father and the Son (cf. Creed), who teaches us all things (cf. Jn 14:26), who dwells in souls in grace as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16), and whom we sadden with our sins (cf. Eph 4:30), who is the glorious soul of the Church.

MARCH 7, 1983

The Faith of Mary

Let us pray, through the intercession of the Mother of God, that our eyes of faith may be opened wide, which will permit us to see and to hear the great works of God.

JANUARY 12, 1986



Just as the patriarch is considered “our father,” so also Mary, with even greater reason, must be seen as “our mother” in faith. Abraham is at the origin, Mary at the summit of the generations of Israel. He anticipates and represents before God the people of the promise; she, a descendent of Abraham and privileged heir of his faith, attains the fruit of the promise. Through the faith and obedience of Mary all of the families of the earth are blessed, according to the promise made to Abraham (cf. Gn 12:3).

The words of the Virgin, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38), evoke not only the figure and attitude of Abraham, but the image of all of the servants of the Lord who have cooperated with him in the history of salvation. More generally, they recall the words of the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, on the day of the covenant: “We will do everything that the Lord has told us” (Ex 24:3). Mary’s response is personal, but it also has a communal significance. Into her “yes,” the faith of ancient Israel merges and that of the Church is inaugurated. Her adherence to the Lord, through the solidarity of grace, is a blessing for all those who believe. Upon her faith rests the salvation of the world.

DECEMBER 4, 1983

The faith to which Mary is called is not an easy one. Even before Cana, while meditating on the words and behavior of the Son, she had to draw on a deep faith. Yet Mary does not withdraw her request, to the point of involving the servants in accomplishing the expected miracle: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). With her docility and the depth of her faith, she looks beyond the immediate sense of Jesus’ words. She intuits the unfathomable abyss and infinite resources of divine mercy and does not doubt her Son’s loving response. The miracle is an answer to the perseverance of her faith.

Mary is thus presented as the model of a faith in Jesus that rises above all obstacles.

MAY 6, 1998

As a fruit of grace, *faith exercises an influence on events*. This is wonderfully seen in the exemplary case of the Blessed Virgin. Her faith-filled acceptance of the angel's message at the Annunciation is decisive for Jesus' very coming into the world. Mary is the Mother of Christ because she first believed in him.

At the wedding feast in Cana, Mary obtains the miracle through her faith. Despite Jesus' reply, which does not seem very favorable, she keeps her trustful attitude, thus becoming a model of the bold and constant faith which overcomes obstacles.

The faith of the Caananite woman was also bold and insistent. Jesus countered this woman, who had come to seek the cure of her daughter, with the Father's plan which restricted his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Caananite replied with the full force of her faith and obtained the miracle: "O woman! Great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire" (Mt 15:28).

In many other cases the Gospel witnesses to the power of faith. Jesus expresses his admiration for the centurion's faith: "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt 8:10). And to Bartimaeus: "Go your way; your faith has made you well" (Mk 10:52). He says the same thing to the woman with a hemorrhage (cf. Mk 5:34).

His words to the father of the epileptic who wanted his son to be cured are no less striking: "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23).

The role of faith is to cooperate with this omnipotence. Jesus asks for this cooperation to the point that upon returning to Nazareth, he works almost no miracles because the inhabitants of his village did not believe in him (cf. Mk 6:56). For Jesus, faith has a decisive importance for the purposes of salvation.

St. Paul will develop Christ's teaching when, in conflict with those who wished to base the hope of salvation on observance of the Jewish law, he forcefully affirms that faith in Christ is the only source of salvation: "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom 3:28). However, it must not be forgotten that St. Paul was thinking of that authentic and full faith which "works through love" (Gal 5:6). True faith is animated by love of God, which is inseparable from love for our brothers and sisters.

The new patrimony of faith, the new and eternal patrimony of the Paschal Mystery, the patrimony of Christ crucified and risen, shows *a new profundity of faith*. When the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room seek Christ after the Resurrection, they recognize and believe in him. But one of them, Thomas, is absent. He does not want to listen to his brothers who assure him that they have seen the Christ. “If I do not see it, I will not believe” (cf. Jn 20:25). And after eight days, the Risen One, having returned in their midst, orders Thomas to touch his wounds. It is only then that Thomas falls to his knees and confesses: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20:28). Responding to him, Christ says, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (Jn 20:29).

The blessing of Mary’s faith reveals the perspective expressed by the words of Christ to the Apostle Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” They have not seen, but they have accepted the testimony of those who have seen—meaning the testimony of the Apostles and of the Church. And they accept it incessantly. They also accept *the testimony of the Mother of Christ*, who still today recounts the great works of God, proclaiming Christ to the people of all times.

We are the generation of the twentieth century, which is now coming to a close. This generation recalls how various means, often unworthy, have been used to try to deprive persons of their faith, to constrain them to atheism, to drive them away from the Church and from the practice of religion.

JULY 3, 1995

From attentive and serene meditation on the response of Mary comes an invitation to profound faith and great generosity. The society of today is sometimes suffocated by the influence of an agnostic and materialistic vision, and by the temptation to a human autonomy closed off to transcendence. It is necessary that you have a broad vision of faith, that you affirm your openness to the horizons of the Absolute, in order to grasp the definitive meaning of human existence and communicate it to your peers. It is only from this faith of the Love that saves that the young generations will be able to find the strength for a constructive affirmation of the dignity of human beings, in harmony with their vocation as children of God. It is only from this ever-renewed search for the Lord that you receive the strength for generous dedication. To you is entrusted the construction of a new “civitas,” within the walls of which discrimination, injustice, unfairness, and strife may be wiped out. This requires persevering and generous action, prompted and fostered by love, that finds its source in the divine meritorious grace of the “yes” of Mary. Have courage, dear young people, the horizons are very wide, the opportunities many. We must work with enlightened creativity and invincible perseverance. Do not draw back from any task, from any effort required by the awareness that you must participate in the construction of a more just, healthier world.

MARCH 25, 1981

The faith of the simple is admired and praised by Jesus, who recognizes in it a wonderful manifestation of the benevolence of the Father (cf. Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21). Over the course of the centuries, it continues to proclaim the wonders of salvation history hidden from the wise. This faith, in harmony with the simplicity of the Virgin, has increased the recognition of her personal holiness and of the transcendent value of her maternity.

NOVEMBER 8, 1995

How to Believe as a Christian

We Christians openly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but we do not impose our faith or convictions on anyone.

JUNE 9, 1989



How can we be authentic Christians in a world that now has so little that is Christian about it? How can we live the faith in an environment that is hostile to it, or at least ignores it with a casual sense of self-sufficiency? This is the way the world is.

Dearest ones, *being Christian today is not easy, we must acknowledge this.* We must go against the tide. Faith is no longer, as it was perhaps in other times, a sort of choice to be taken for granted. It is a decision that calls upon all to invest themselves with their own convictions, challenging the environment.

Faith, dearest ones, is like gold: *it is purified in fire.* In order to be authentic, it must pass through the Cross of Christ (cf. 1 Pt 1:7).

MAY 23, 1993

Cultural context permeates the living of Christian faith, which contributes in turn little by little to shaping that context. To every culture Christians bring the unchanging truth of God, which he reveals in the history and culture of a people... While it demands of all who hear it the adherence of faith, the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own cultural identity. This in no way creates division, because the community of the baptized is marked by a universality which can embrace every culture and help to foster whatever is implicit in them to the point where it will be fully explicit in the light of truth.

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 70

This is a new characteristic of faith: *believing as Christians* also means *accepting the truth revealed* by God, *as the Church teaches it*. But at the same time, Vatican Council II recalls that “the body of the faithful as a whole... cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, ‘from the bishops down to the last member of the laity,’ it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. By this sense of faith, which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God’s People accepts not the word of men but the very word of God (cf. 1 Thes 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life. All this it does under the lead of a sacred teaching authority to which it loyally defers” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 12).

Believing as Christians means agreeing to be introduced and led by the Spirit to the fullness of truth in a conscious and voluntary manner.

APRIL 24, 1985

Believing as Christians means precisely being introduced by the Holy Spirit into the whole truth of Divine Revelation. It means being a community of faithful open to the word of the Gospel of Christ. Both of these things are possible in every generation, because the living *transmission of Divine Revelation*, contained in Tradition and in Sacred Scripture, *remains intact in the Church* through the special service of the Magisterium, in harmony with the supernatural sense of faith of the People of God.

MAY 1, 1985

Believing as Christians means adhering to this truth by using the guarantee of truth that by the institution of Christ himself comes from the Church. This applies to all believers, and therefore—on the proper level and to the extent appropriate—also to theologians and exegetes. For to all is revealed in this area the merciful Providence of God, who wished to grant us not only the gift of his self-revelation, but also the guarantee of its faithful preservation, interpretation, and explanation, entrusting it into the hands of the Church.

MAY 1, 1985

Believing as Christians means “accepting the invitation to the conversation with God,” abandoning oneself to one’s Creator. This kind of deliberate faith also predisposes us to that *dialogue of salvation* that the Church must carry forward with all people of the world of today (cf. Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*; AAS 56/1964/654), including nonbelievers.

With such an arrangement, the Church comes to our aid once again in order to respond to the question: “What is faith? What does it mean to believe?” precisely against the backdrop of disbelief and atheism, which often takes the form of a systematic attack against religion, and especially against Christianity. Precisely in consideration of such hostility, faith must become particularly *deliberate, penetrating, and mature, characterized by a profound sense of responsibility and love toward all people*. Awareness of the difficulties, of the objections and persecutions must reawaken an even more complete readiness “to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Pt 3:15).

JUNE 12, 1985

Believing as Christians means accepting the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which constitutes *the essential content of the New Testament*.

The Council tells us this: “For when the fullness of time arrived (cf. Gal. 4:4), the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us in His fullness of grace and truth (cf. John 1:14). Christ established the Kingdom of God on earth, manifested His Father and Himself by deeds and words, and completed His work by His death, resurrection, and glorious ascension and by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Having been lifted up from the earth, He draws all men to Himself (cf. Jn 12:32, Greek text), He who alone has the words of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:68)... To these realities, the writings of the New Testament stand as a perpetual and divine witness” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 17).

And therefore they constitute a particular support for our faith.

MAY 22, 1985

If *believing as Christians* means responding to the self-revelation of God, the fullness of which is in Jesus Christ, this faith however does not avoid, especially in the contemporary world, a deliberate relationship with the non-Christian religions, in that in each one of these is expressed in some way “what human beings have in common and... what promotes fellowship among them” (*Nostra Aetate*, no. 1). The Church does not avoid such a relationship; on the contrary, it desires and seeks this.

Human beings seek in religion the answer to the questions listed above, and in various ways establish their own relationship with the “mystery that surrounds our existence.” Now the different non-Christian *religions* are above all *the expression of this search* on the part of human beings, while *the Christian faith* has its own foundation in the revelation on the part of God. And in this consists—in spite of certain affinities with other religions—its *essential difference* in their regard.

It could therefore be said that *believing as Christians* means accepting, professing, and proclaiming Christ, who is “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6), all the more fully to the extent to which are seen in the values of the other religions signs, reflections, and almost presages of him.

JUNE 5, 1985

Faith as the human response to the word of Divine Revelation entered into its definitive phase with the coming of Christ, when “in these last days” God “spoke to us through a son” (Heb 1:2).

Believing as Christians means accepting the definitive self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, responding to it with an “abandonment to God” of which Christ himself is the foundation, living example, and salvific mediator.

Such a faith therefore includes acceptance of the entire *Christian economy of salvation* as a new and definitive covenant, which “will never pass away.” As the Council says, “We now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 4).

APRIL 3, 1985

The torch of faith that is received with Baptism must be held up high through word and example, so as to permit all to draw light and warmth from it.

Living as Christians involves the duty, as far as possible for each one, of *spreading the faith*. In this consists the universal missionary mandate of the Church, a task that is certainly difficult, but that comes with consolation from the Lord: “I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

JANUARY 31, 1992

Having become children of God and come to the light of faith by virtue of holy Baptism, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we receive in Confirmation comes to illuminate this panorama more widely, opening our souls to a clearer and deeper vision. To summarize, in addition to sanctifying grace we obtain with Confirmation greater light and are called to greater responsibility. This is why it is commonly said that [this sacrament] makes us perfect Christians. *Being perfect Christians* means making room for our faith; it means truly living, in our everyday existence, as *children of light*.

JUNE 27, 1982

Never be ashamed of the Gospel! Do not let yourselves be overcome by the fear of professing with humble boldness the joy of belonging to the ecclesial community. Do not confuse dialogue with an uncritical acceptance of fashionable opinions, but, following the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, “test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thes 5:21).

This service to the Truth must have the precious support of a solid and precise formation, constantly nourished by meditation on the word of God, supported by those who guide you on the journey of faith, regularly checked on the basis of criteria suitable for discerning the genuine ecclesial identity of an association such as yours, determined to be in full and constant communion with the Pastors of the Church.

APRIL 26, 2002

Faith and Life

Become aware of the greatness of your vocation and of the duties that spring from it. No one is a Christian for himself alone. The gift of faith is given to us so that we may bear witness to it, in word and action, before our brothers and sisters.

JULY 16, 1989



Faith is not a deposit to be held passively, but demands to be lived ever anew.

This is why we must deepen our understanding of the truths of faith through adequate catechetical instruction intended to illuminate the mind at a time in which contrasting ideologies are sowing doubts and uncertainties.

MARCH 19, 1983

We know that there is underway, under new forms, *a cultural challenge* that today is taking on gigantic proportions in part because of the presence of the means of social communication: *the attempt to separate faith from life*, the Gospel from culture, morality from politics, from the economy, from technology.

Some are thinking of a world without God, of a history without Christ, of a society without Church. Others maintain that the light of faith may illuminate individual consciences, but do not accept that the Gospel can exercise its influence on social life.

This challenge can be overcome only by the faith of believers: a faith that is mature, adult, persuasive, and witnessing. The future is in the hands of men and women who entrust themselves with humility and love to the superhuman power of the Mystery.

JUNE 21, 1992

We must overcome any separation between faith and life. The Christian formation of the laity requires a pastoral approach to education that illuminates and orients their whole life with the light and power of faith. The faith professed must be transformed into Christian life. May ecclesial unity and community always prevail in truth and charity, under the guidance of the bishops, fathers and teachers in faith. In obedience to the pastors and to sound doctrine, may the laity be able to respond to every attempt or manipulation that might seek to sow division and discord. “For the peace of Jerusalem pray” (Ps 122:6); that the new Jerusalem which is the Church may be “built as a city, walled round about” (Ps 122:3) in fraternity and love.

JULY 6, 1986

Learn to live your Christian faith with consistency. It is not enough, in fact, to know Jesus; our lives must be consistent with the ideas we profess.

Be consistent! The Christian faith, our very dignity and the expectations of the present world essentially demand this commitment of consistency. And the first fundamental expression of consistency is the struggle against sin, which is a constant and even heroic effort to live in grace. Unfortunately, we are living at a time in which sin has even become an industry that generates money, mobilizes economic plans, confers well-being. This situation is certainly shocking and terrible. And yet we must not allow ourselves to be frightened or overcome: every age demands “consistency” from Christians. And so, even in present-day society shrouded in an atmosphere of secularism and permissiveness, which can tempt and entice, remain consistent, you young people, with the message of the friendship of Jesus; live in grace, remain in his love, putting into practice the whole moral law, nourishing your souls with the Body of Christ, making regular and serious use of the Sacrament of Penance.

AUGUST 30, 1980

Faith is alive through the works that conform to it. These are the works of charity. *Faith is alive through the love of God*. Love expresses itself in the observance of the commandments. There can be no contradiction between the knowledge (“I know him”) and the action of a confessor of Christ. Only those who *complete* their *faith with works* remain in the truth.

What does it mean to be Christian?

Being Christian—now just as then, in the first generation of confessors of Christ—means continuing to accept the witness of the Apostles, eyewitnesses. It means *believing with the same faith* that was born within them by the works and words of Christ, confirmed by his Death and Resurrection.

We too, belonging to the *present generation of confessors of Christ*, must ask to have the same experience as the two disciples of Emmaus: “Lord Jesus, make us understand the Scriptures; may our hearts burn in our breasts when you speak to us” (cf. Lk 24:32).

May “our hearts burn!” because *faith cannot be only a cold calculation of the intellect*. It must be brought to life by love. Alive, through the works in which is expressed the truth revealed by God as *inner truth* of the human person.

Then we too—even if we are not eyewitnesses of the works and words, of the Death and Resurrection—inherit the testimony of the Apostles. *And we ourselves become witnesses of Christ*.

APRIL 25, 1982

Continue your efforts to make your faith more deliberate and mature. This must also find its expression in Christian responsibility, have an influence on life, shape consciences and morality by freeing them from the dangers and threats in which they find themselves ever more frequently. In the light of faith, the awareness of civic duty reaches maturity. Faith obliges us to take on our social responsibilities with courage: it is an inexhaustible source of energy, providing deeper motivations for the transformation and development of the human person and of society, respecting the existing institutions and yet remembering the well-known words that Peter and the Apostles spoke when they were forbidden to preach and teach in the name of Jesus: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

MARCH 20, 1986

*It is necessary that the Christian faith be deeply understood and lived, in such a way as to present as an indispensable criterion of personal and social development the primacy of ethics over technology, of the person over things, of spirit over matter. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God: this is their sublime dignity, and their vocation and mission is to respect and promote, in conscience and responsible freedom, their “humanity” according to the full “truth” of the human person, which shines upon the face of Christ the Lord, *Redemptor hominis*, the perfect man. “Your faith must become a presence and a witness in the world; that is, it must express itself at the various levels of your daily lives; you must live as Christians in all the dimensions: family, culture, the arts, society, politics—in a word, all of the human dimensions!”*

NOVEMBER 4, 1983

There must be realized in [the medical profession] that profound unity of faith and life to which Vatican II alludes: “This council exhorts Christians, as citizens of two cities, to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to the gospel spirit. They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come, think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities.... This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43)

The complete, unified, and dynamic vision of the world and of history offered by the Christian faith constitutes an inexhaustible resource for understanding the *new relationships that must be established between social praxis and the concept of health*, and to reaffirm with renewed vigor the validity of that professional ethic which has been, over the centuries, the true soul of the culture of medicine.

NOVEMBER 25, 1995

Our faith must give a demonstration of itself in concrete witness and in works of love.

When today's generation is strenuously seeking authentic values and models of life, we Christians must give them, through the power of our faith and our hope, a persuasive and clear indication of which way to go. When out of fear of the future or shortsighted egoism an atmosphere is created that is hostile to life, then may you be able to transmit to men and women the courage necessary to face life and defend human dignity in all the phases of its existence!

SEPTEMBER 1, 1982

The life of faith manifests itself above all in participation in liturgical and sacramental life, as also through a life of constant prayer. It is for this reason that every church institution must take it to heart to bring great vigor to this life, in order to avoid the danger of becoming a bureaucratic structure. Human beings are thirsty for the living and true God, for personal and communal contact with he who is Truth and Life.

JANUARY 22, 1983

Everyone's life and the whole of one's life must be at Christ's disposal. Christianity means daily giving, in response to the gift of Christ who came into the world so that all might have life and have it to the full. Or, as so aptly expressed in the theme of my visit to this country: To die for the faith is a gift to some; to live the faith is a call for all.

FEBRUARY 18, 1981

The Christian knows that the future of the human being and of the world is in the hands of divine Providence, and this provides a constant reason for hope and inner peace. However, the Christian also knows that God, moved by his love for man, asks him to collaborate in improving the world and in governing history's events. In this difficult beginning of the third millennium, many clearly perceive, even to the point of suffering, the need for teachers and witnesses who are able to demonstrate valid ways that lead to a world more worthy of man. It is the historical task of believers to propose Christ as "the way" by which to advance toward that new humanity which is in God's plan. It is clear, therefore, that one priority of the new evangelization consists precisely in helping the man of our time to encounter God personally and to live with him and for him.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

Faith and Ethics

The just man is the person who prays, lives by faith, and seeks to do good in every concrete circumstance of life.

MARCH 17, 2002



Faith is inseparable from Christian ethics. It is the vast field of the formation of consciences: it is incumbent upon the Church, and especially upon all of you, who have been established as teachers and guides for the People of God. Your prophetic word will be able to give the just person true values. And this service is of capital importance for society as a whole, the changes of which involve many dangers. We are considering above all family ethics and social ethics. You have spoken out on this issue with courage and clarity in your documents. I hope that your countrymen and women will take up the teachings in them as inspiration for their lives.

APRIL 29, 1989

The Church is called to illuminate through the Gospel all of the areas of human life and society, without excluding the moral and social dimension. As I indicated in my Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, “The attempt to set freedom in opposition to truth, and indeed to separate them radically, is the consequence, manifestation and consummation of another more serious and destructive dichotomy, that which separates faith from morality” (no. 88). Because of this, you have emphasized in particular the necessity of consistency between faith and life. “Faith is a decision involving one’s whole existence. It is an encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and of life between the believer and Jesus Christ, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6). It entails an act of trusting abandonment to Christ, which enables us to live as he lived (cf. Gal 2:20), in profound love of God and of our brothers and sisters” (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 88).

JANUARY 20, 1994

Faith and Theology

The intimate bond between theological and philosophical wisdom is one of the Christian tradition's most distinctive treasures in the exploration of revealed truth.

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 105



Theology, *intellectus fidei*, has its roots in faith. *Without faith there is no theology*. This is why theologians must be persons of faith, firm in the assurance that the true faith is always that professed by the Church. According to their intimate nature they will apply their intelligence to the Christian mystery, and will be, in a particular way, people of prayer. The spiritual life is, in fact, an indispensable condition for theological research.

As persons of faith, theologians have the mission of sounding the riches of light contained in the mystery. In speaking of mystery, in fact, we highlight not the transparency or difficulty of the message revealed, but the separation existing between, on the one side, he who “dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Tm 6:16) and who makes himself known to us, and, on the other, the limitations of our created spirit. Faith allows us to adhere to him who is Source of light. Theologians will dedicate themselves to bringing forth, with the help of reason, the unfathomable riches received from on high.

DECEMBER 2, 1994

Theology is structured as an understanding of faith in the light of a twofold methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. With the first, theology makes its own the content of Revelation as this has been gradually expounded in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Church's living Magisterium. With the second, theology seeks to respond through speculative inquiry to the specific demands of disciplined thought.

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 65

True theology proceeds from the faith and aims at leading to the faith.

The theologian is therefore, first and foremost, a believer, a person of faith. But the theologian is a believer who asks himself questions about his own faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*), with the aim of reaching a deeper understanding of the faith itself. The two aspects (of faith and mature reflection) are intimately connected, intertwined: Their intimate coordination and interpenetration are what make for true theology and as a result decide the contents, modalities and spirit according to which the sacred doctrine (*sacra doctrinal*) is elaborated and studied.

Moreover, since the faith, which is the point of departure and the point of arrival of theology, brings about a personal relationship between the believer and Jesus Christ in the Church, theology also has intrinsic Christological and ecclesial connotations, which the candidate to the priesthood should take up consciously, not only because of what they imply for his personal life but also inasmuch as they affect his pastoral ministry. If our faith truly welcomes the word of God, it will lead to a radical “yes” on the part of the believer to Jesus Christ, who is the full and definitive word of God to the world (cf. Heb 1:1ff.). As a result, theological reflection is centered on adherence to Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God: Mature reflection has to be described as a sharing in the “thinking” of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 2:16) in the human form of a science (*scientia fidei*): At the same time, faith inserts believers in the Church and makes them partake in the life of the Church as a community of faith. Hence theology has an ecclesial dimension, because it is a mature reflection on the faith of the Church by the theologian who is a member of the Church.

Theology is a method of understanding the same reality that reason explores with the aid of a scientific method. Science changes its methods and obtains new results, but its objective remains the same. Let us say that this objective must not be manipulated or reduced a priori to a mathematical model, but must include the totality of reality.

Theology is the permanent effort of faith toward self-reflection and articulation. It is *fides quaerens intellectum*.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1987

Faith is the indispensable foundation and fundamental disposition of all theology. Faith constitutes its starting point and its constant intrinsic point of reference. St. Anselmo of Canterbury has given us that well-known definition of the work of theology: faith seeking understanding. Theology springs from faith, from the desire of the believer to understand the faith.

What faith teaches is not the result of human investigation but comes from *divine revelation*. Faith has not been transmitted to the human mind as a philosophical invention to be perfected; rather, it has been entrusted to the Spouse of Christ as a divine deposit to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted.

OCTOBER 15, 1988

The ancient motto “*fides quaerens intellectum, intellectus quaerens fidem*” is always timely. An authentic faith seeks knowledge of the mysteries, just as a healthy use of the intelligence benefits substantially from the light of faith. In fact, only an intelligent faith, aware of itself and its reasons, can maintain the decision to live according to the Gospel. Only study illumined by faith, the quest to know God more deeply, can lead to union with Christ, give a solid basis to personal vocation, and prepare for the mission.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2001

Constant dialogue with pastors and theologians all over the world permits you to be attentive to the demands of understanding and exploring the doctrine of the faith, which theology interprets while at the same time it enlightens you concerning the initiatives helpful for fostering and strengthening the unity of faith and the role of guidance of the Magisterium in understanding the truth and in building up the ecclesial communion in charity.

The unity of faith, for the sake of which the Magisterium has authority and ultimate deliberative power in the interpretation of the written and transmitted word of God, is a primary value which, if respected, does not entail the suffocation of theological investigation, but confers upon it a stable foundation. Theology, in its task of making explicit the intelligible content of the faith, expresses the intrinsic orientation of human intelligence to the truth, and the irrepressible demand of the believer rationally to explore the mystery revealed.

In order to reach this goal, theology can never reduce itself to the “private” reflection of a theologian or group of theologians. *The vital environment of the theologian is the Church*, and in order to remain faithful to its identity theology cannot do without intimate participation in the fabric of the life of the Church, of its doctrine, of its holiness, of its prayer.

NOVEMBER 24, 1995

The study of theology and of ecclesiastical disciplines is directed to evangelization. May you know how to learn a rigorous method, accepting the demands of research with courage and generosity, to experience in first person the fruitful meeting between faith and reason. By these “two wings” you can draw ever nearer to the contemplation of the truth (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, Introduction) and make yourselves joyful travelling companions for the men of our time, often perturbed and lost on the roads of the world.

OCTOBER 19, 2001

Faith and Science

The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of faith.

JANUARY 16, 1982



One of the prejudices of which one can still find traces in certain ways of conducting science concerns religion, the practice of faith, the morality that the Gospel proposes, or rather demands: almost as if being a sincere believer could constitute an obstacle to the exercise and unfolding of thought. It may be helpful to recall, in this regard, two brief passages from the *Pensées* by Blaise Pascal. The great scientist and religious thinker writes: “Our whole dignity consists in thought. It is with this that we must ennoble ourselves, and not with space and time, which we are unable to fill. So let us work at thinking well; this is the principle of morality.... Now, the order of thought lies in beginning with oneself, with one’s maker and end” (nos. 347, 146). So the order of thought is correct when it does not deny the appropriate space to the consideration of human beings, of their Author, of their end. Its application is correct and beneficial when it benefits the human person: *the whole person, every person*, according to those criteria of universality, of interdependence, and of solidarity which modern science itself has contributed to demonstrating not only as valid but as indispensable for the whole world.

MAY 2, 1992

It is a fairly widespread opinion that scientists are generally agnostic, and that science draws people away from God. How much truth is there in this opinion?

The extraordinary progress made by science, particularly over the past two centuries, has sometimes led people to believe that it is capable on its own of answering all of humanity's questions and solving all of its problems. Some have deduced from this that there is no longer any need for God. Trust in science is seen as having supplanted faith.

Between science and faith—it is said—one must make a choice: one either believes in the one or embraces the other. Those who pursue the efforts of scientific research no longer have any need for God; and on the contrary, those who want to believe in God cannot be serious scientists, because between science and faith there is an irreparable opposition.

JULY 17, 1985

Vatican Council II deplored certain attitudes of those who maintain that between science and faith there is opposition. It also indicated that the legitimate autonomy of science must not be understood erroneously as independence from God, and declared: "If methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith. For earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36). In our own time, a correct relationship between science and faith seems particularly necessary because of the enormous problems raised by the very progress of science and technology: the dangers of environmental pollution, of conventional weapons, chemical and nuclear, of the manipulation of the genetic patrimony. In this way science as well, which is at the service of humanity but at times seems opposed to humanity in a frightening manner, must confront in a new way the existential questions: who are human beings, from where do they come and where are they going? It is to these fundamental and decisive questions that the Christian faith intends to offer a response. It intends thereby to serve science as well, and together with science human beings, so that they may live in a truly dignified and meaningful way.

NOVEMBER 6, 1989

The possibilities made available by science and technology are multiplying ever more, to the point we are asking ourselves about the very *raison d'être* of scientific research. *Not everything that is materially feasible is also morally licit*, because not everything is in harmony with the dignity and value of the human person. Science describes how things *are* but is silent about how they *should be*. And yet, it is precisely by taking into account the ethical order that one can establish a life responding to the demands of the true and the good. *Human beings do not live by technology alone*. This is why there is more attention today, including in the academic assemblies of Europe and of the world, to the conviction that the universities have the specific responsibility of *stimulating reflection on the ethical aspect of theoretical and applied research*, in the awareness that the new technologies can create ethical and legal conflicts of enormous impact in everyday life.

APRIL 19, 1991

There is no competition between science and faith with regard to the human person; there is rather complementarity, since science alone is unable to satisfy the demand for the absolute, which is irrepressible in the human heart. A science that is not split off from faith or an enemy to it will help human beings to escape from the tangle of their problems, to find solutions that may free them from the slavery of sin and egoism, that may open them to the hope that rests upon God, the giver of every perfect gift.

This *encounter between faith and culture* is, moreover, necessary, in order that human beings may keep clear of the ideology of consumerism, which alienates them, stifling their creativity of thought and action.

There can be no future that rests upon science estranged from faith, because science encounters faith in vast problems that interest the human person.

NOVEMBER 3, 1984

Science and faith are never opposed to each other; I have absolutely no need to insist on this with you. The Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, and the Magisterium have affirmed this repeatedly. The experience of scientists and believers, and I would say also of scientist-believers, demonstrates this every day in the modern world. Both science and faith, each with its own objectives and specific methods, are at the service of humanity. They converge upon its good.

MAY 5, 1986

Today, with the reciprocal relationships between scientific truth and religious truth having been clarified better, many scientists, while legitimately raising significant problems like those concerning the evolution of living forms, and of man in particular, or that concerning the finalism immanent to the cosmos itself in its becoming, are taking on a more participatory and respectful attitude toward the Christian faith on creation. This, then, is a field that is opening up for it beneficial dialogue between ways of approaching the reality of the world and of the human person, fairly acknowledged as different and yet converging on a more profound level in favor of the one man, created—as the Bible says on its first page—as “image of God,” and therefore as the wise and intelligent “dominator” of the world (cf. Gn 1:27-28).

JANUARY 8, 1986

Both religion and science must preserve their autonomy and their distinctiveness. *Religion is not founded on science, nor is science an extension of religion.* Each should possess its own principles, its pattern of procedures, its diversities of interpretation, and its own conclusions. Christianity possesses the source of its justification within itself and does not expect science to constitute its primary apologetic. Science must bear witness to its own worth. While each can and should support the other as distinct dimensions of a common human culture, neither ought to assume that it forms a necessary premise for the other.

JUNE 1, 1988

At this particular moment of history, marked by contradictions that demonstrate all of their negative freight when they are compared with the demands posed by respect for human life, the Church, while it encourages and supports science, is grateful for the help that it receives from this. The ecclesiastical Magisterium, when it enters into areas that are the object of scientific research, does not do so by virtue of any particular scientific competence of its own. “The Church intervenes only by virtue of its evangelical mission: it has the duty to bring to human reason the light of Revelation, to defend the person and to watch over ‘his dignity as a person who is endowed with a spiritual soul and with moral responsibility and who is called to beatific communion with God’ (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae*, no. 1). When it comes to the human person, in fact, the issues exceed the realm of science, which is unable to explain the transcendence of the subject or dictate the moral rules that stem from the centrality and primordial dignity of the subject in the universe” (Address to the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 1994).

Science and faith do not exhaust their relationship in the area of the *abstract knowledge* of the mystery of life, but introduce the intelligence and heart to the *experiential knowledge* of all those values which are grouped around the reality of living. These must work together to construct around the fundamental human right to life the just hierarchy of all other individual and social human rights, because the alternative to a culture of life is nothing other than the negation of life, and, with this, of every other human right.

NOVEMBER 26, 1994

The dialogue between science and faith is not only possible, but essential.

The light of reason, which makes science possible, and the light of Revelation, which makes faith possible, come from a single source. They are on two distinct and autonomous trajectories, but by their nature they can never enter into a collision course. Whenever some sort of friction should be seen, this would be the symptom of an unfortunate pathology.

In God, therefore, although they are on different paths, *science and faith find their beginning*.

The dialogue between science and faith, in respect for their respective domains, *is doubly necessary on the terrain of applied scientific knowledge*.

MAY 8, 1993

The harmonious and constructive journey of science and faith hoped for by Vatican Council II (cf. *Message to Men of Science*, December 8, 1965), tends to the affirmation of fundamental human rights, centered upon the promotion and defense of life and its dignity. Faith stimulates, encourages, and supports this convergence, which has revealed itself to be favorable to the achievements of reason, because *there is nothing genuinely human that does not find an echo in the hearts of Christians*. The field of health and health care, in the various areas of education, prevention, diagnosis, therapy and rehabilitation, offers countless confirmations of the concrete possibility of a fruitful *partnership between reason and faith* in order to construct, in freedom and in complete respect for the human person, the civilization of life, which, in order to be truly such, must also be a civilization of love.

NOVEMBER 25, 1995

When knowledge proudly withdraws into itself, it runs the risk of not always expressing prospects for life; if, on the contrary, it is accompanied by faith, then it is assisted in seeing the human good. The Apostle Paul warns: “‘Knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1). Faith, which is made strong by love and is expressed in it, suggests to knowledge a criterion of truth that sees the essence of man and his real needs.

Understanding the contents of faith promotes the dignity of man and his reason.

NOVEMBER 11, 1998

The compatibility between faith and science is not only an abstract idea but a reality lived by concrete persons. With your lives, you demonstrate that faith does not limit the space and freedom of science but, on the contrary, that the responses of the different scientific disciplines are nothing other than partial responses for the person who is profoundly thirsting for truth. Because science does not want to and cannot grasp more than one sector of reality, all the more so in that this perception is newly limited by an intentional and necessary methodological delimitation.

Faith, on the other hand, is able to transcend partial visions of reality, if such a faith considers them as created by God. In this perspective, it is then that created things reveal their meaning. Human beings, in particular, find their dignity in the fact that their origin and ultimate destiny are in God. Scientific progress that harms the inalienable value of the human person must be denounced and combated.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1982

By its very nature, scholarship is ultimately theocentric, and as such it renders immense service to humanity. It helps people in their search for the meaning of life. It supports them in their gropings for the light of truth. Scholarship, with the truth it brings, does not abandon people when they have succumbed to disregarding human life, to tolerating violence, to pursuing greed, to accepting injustice. No, even as certain sectors of humanity are guilty of all of this and are hence drifting to destruction, truth offers help. It will not go away. It still makes itself felt. It appeals to the highest instincts of man. It confronts his conscience. It will plead its own case and prove it!

As scholarship discovers by its proper method the existence of God and receives insights into his being, it helps man to understand his own nature, to know himself. The great nobility of the human mind is based above all on its ability to know God and to search more and more deeply into the mystery of God's life and there—at that point—to discover also man.

It is no wonder then that, as centers of learning, the universities of the past and the present have welcomed into their midst schools of theology, dedicated to the science of God. The truth of God leads us to the truth of man, and the truth of man leads us to the truth of God.

NOVEMBER 26, 1986

The challenges touch upon fundamental questions. What is at stake is the significance of scientific research and of technology, of social coexistence, of culture, but even more deeply, what is at stake is the very significance of the human person. It could be said, in other words and from a more general perspective, that such challenges concern the truth about human beings in their personal and social dimension; the truth about the world with its laws to be discovered and used for the good of humanity; the truth about God, the foundational being to whom everything is to be traced back and who alone gives ultimate meaning to human beings and to the world.

APRIL 25, 1989

The world is the stage on which each of us is called to play our part to the praise and glory of God the Creator and Savior.

Thirsting for true wisdom, for knowledge of the universe and of the laws which regulate it, fascinated by the true, the good, and the beautiful, seek to explore the Supreme Source of all: God, the origin of every truth, who wisely sustains and governs all that exists! May the word of God illumine your exploration of the paths which lead to the truth. Nurturing a deep love for truth, you will become in your daily undertakings passionate inquirers and ready collaborators of all who are searching for the truth.

OCTOBER 3, 1998

Among many scientists the conviction is reemerging that *science and faith can no longer ignore one another*, and that it is necessary to build a bridge between the one and the other. This is not a matter of a reconciliation dictated solely by contingent motivations. In reality, the religious question cannot be smothered in the human heart, and the very vision of the world offered by science cannot help but refer to radical questions: Why is nature rationally knowable? Why is it orderly, and not chaotic? The harmonious dynamism of the cosmos raises *the question of the metaphysical causality of the ultimate finality* of all that exists. With the age of scientism having ended, it can be seen more clearly that the perspective of faith is not opposed to that of authentic scientific knowledge. On the contrary, one realizes that between these, in spite of the distinction of their respective levels and competencies, a fruitful dialogue can be established.

The Church, for its part, has no other ambition than that of proclaiming to human beings salvation in Jesus Christ. *Be not afraid of Christ! Be not afraid of the Church!* It stands at the side of those who have at heart the dignity and authentic freedom of the human person. It has been and will continue to be the faithful guardian of your historical memory and of the most noble traditions.

MAY 19, 1996

The scientist is not a creator of truth but its explorer. It is revealed to him to the extent that he is faithful to it. Respect for the truth obliges scientists and thinkers to do their utmost to learn more about it and, as far as possible, to be careful in presenting it to others. Of course—as the Council says, creation and society are endowed with their own laws and values which man must gradually discover and, in this regard, he must recognize the demands of the method that are proper to every science and art (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36). Yet we realize that the only correct way to seek the truth is to proceed according to a methodological inquiry in a truly scientific way while respecting moral norms. The honest aspiration to know the truth can never ignore what belongs to its essence: the acceptance of good and evil.

AUGUST 30, 2001

The man of science knows perfectly, from the point of view of his knowledge, that truth cannot be subject to negotiation, cannot be obscured or abandoned to free conventions or agreements between groups of power, societies, or States. Therefore, because of the ideal of service to truth, he feels a special responsibility in relation to the advancement of mankind, not understood in generic or ideal terms, but as the advancement of the whole man and of everything that is authentically human.

Science conceived in this way can encounter the Church without difficulty and engage in a fruitful dialogue with her, because it is precisely man who is “the primary and fundamental way for the Church” (*Redemptor Hominis*, no. 14). Science can then look with interest to biblical Revelation which unveils the ultimate meaning of the dignity of man, who is created in the image of God. It can above all meet Christ, the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the perfect Man. Man, when following him, also becomes more human (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 41).

NOVEMBER 13, 2000

The present condition is such that humanity finds itself colliding against those ancient and pressing questions, the temporary setting aside of which may perhaps speed up scientific and technological progress but has also created new problems: What can we know—what must we do—what can we hope? The search for answers must again be undertaken by science, technology, and politics, but also by philosophy, art, and religion, after their paths have many times traveled a parallel journey or have separated from one another.

Knowledge must once again be joined with Wisdom and with Faith.

JUNE 26, 1988

Faith and Culture

Without reducing faith to culture, the Church strives to give cultural depth to the life of faith and to ensure that faith inspires private, public life, national and international realities.

MAY 31, 2002



In our time there is the risk of dissociating faith and culture, making the field of modern culture almost impenetrable to the values and language of faith, as if there were an unbridgeable chasm between these. On the other hand, today there is the danger of passing off as genuine cultural values a whole series of behaviors that are not in harmony with the dignity of the person and that seek to impose attitudes that, in distancing themselves from the Christian conception of life, can never be really human.

NOVEMBER 16, 1990

Culture *does not represent the absolute* in the field of values but is *one path to the absolute*. The Church as well is on a journey toward the great destination by its indispensable vocation, and to this end cannot ignore the realities that it encounters along this journey. In fact, what were the universities that it founded if not *places of encounter and dialogue between faith and knowledge*? The name itself, *universitas studiorum*, signifies the convergence of various perspectives of knowledge in a higher synthesis that gives meaning to human beings and their destiny.

As I said at the University of Pavia, “there is no competition between science and faith with regard to the human person, but rather complementarity, because science alone is not able to satisfy the irrepressible demand for the absolute in the human heart.”

The same problems and the modern achievements referred to above could foster *new forms of dialogue between culture and faith*. From ecology to bioethics to computer sciences, opportunities are emerging that must not be overlooked. The Church feels that it is living through one of the most innovative phases of history, in which the very concept of culture has expanded. For this reason, the social doctrine of the Church must also exert itself with creative force in original endeavors. One could think, for example, of the massive migrations in which millions and millions of persons are moving around, bringing with them a heritage that has matured over many centuries, and determined not to dissolve it in a process of deculturation and assimilation on the part of their countries of arrival. How can we fail to take note of the urgency of preserving and prizing certain forms of diversity, when they show themselves to be original and effective against homogenization and generalization? On the level of social structures, one can glimpse multicultural forms of society that exceed the traditional geographical and political confines.

MARCH 19, 1991

The synthesis between culture and faith is a demand not only of culture but also of faith. As my predecessor Paul VI taught: “What matters is to evangelize man’s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots)... always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 20). If, in fact, it is true that the faith is not identified with any culture and is independent with respect to all cultures, it is no less true that, precisely for this reason, the faith is called to inspire and impregnate every culture. It is the whole person, in the concreteness of his or her everyday life, who is saved in Christ, and it is thus the whole person who must be realized in Christ. A faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully received, not wholly pondered, not faithfully lived.

JANUARY 16, 1982

Faith is the meeting between God and man: to God, who in history reveals and realizes his plan of salvation, man responds through faith, receiving and making his own this plan, directing his life to this message (cf. Rom 10:9; 2 Cor 4:13). Faith is a gift from God to which man's resolve must correspond.

But if culture is the specifically human way to approach ever more being and if, on the other hand, in faith man opens himself to knowledge of the Supreme Being in whose image and likeness he was created (cf. Gn 1:26), there is no one who does not see what a profound relationship there is between one and the other human experience. One understands, then, why the Second Vatican Council wanted to emphasize the "outstanding incentives and encouragements" which the mystery of Christian faith offers to man that he may fulfill with greater commitment the task of building up a more human world, that is, one corresponding to his "total vocation" (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 57).

Faith and culture, therefore, *are called to meet and to interact precisely in the sphere of communications*: the effective achievement of the meeting and interaction, as well as their intensity and effectiveness, in large measure depends on the suitability of the media through which communication takes place. The press, cinema, the theater, radio, television, with the evolution which each of these media has undergone during the course of history, have proved to be not always adequate to the encounter between faith and culture. The culture of our time particularly seems to be dominated and shaped by the newest and most powerful among the means of communication—radio and, above all, television—so much so that at times they seem to assert themselves as ends and not as simple means, also because of the characteristics of organization and structure which they require.

MAY 24, 1984

Faith is the source of culture, and culture is the effusion of faith. This is the conception that you undoubtedly share, and that has led me to create the Pontifical Council for Culture: “The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture, but also of faith.... A faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully received, not wholly pondered, not faithfully lived” (Letter to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State, May 20, 1982; AAS 74 [1982], p. 685).

The whole living tradition of the Church teaches us this: faith seeks understanding, and understanding seeks faith. Both the need to understand and the need to believe are profoundly rooted in the human heart. This is why it is the Church itself that is the point of departure for the creation of the universities, in the profound conviction that the effort to search for truth, which is the center of the human spirit, far from being an obstacle to the acceptance of the truth in its fullness, is on the contrary intensely stimulated by it. As I said on June 1, 1980, to the students of the Catholic University of Paris, the Catholic universities “allow you to unify in the existential sense, in your intellectual work, two orders of reality that too often tend to be opposed to each other as if they were antithetical, the search for truth and the certainty of already knowing the source of truth.”

This is the *living* and fruitful *sybiosis between faith and culture*, not a dead abstraction, but an existence full of and overflowing with vitality, in which *the mystery of faith is at the center* of everyday life, of research, teaching, work, as well as of joyful fraternal conviviality.

MAY 20, 1985

The search for truth, for goodness, for beauty, for the “*verum, bonum, et pulchrum*,” characterizes the most profound human aspirations. Upon these transcendent values, so necessary for our society, is opened the most fruitful dialogue between faith and culture. A dialogue that is ever more necessary in order that truth may stand above ideologies, that goodness and love may overcome divisions and hatred, that the values of the spirit may build up the inner man, and that the aspiration to transcendent beauty may elevate him to his true dignity as a son of God.

APRIL 25, 1991

Culture and holiness! We must not be afraid, when saying these two words, of pairing them unduly. On the contrary, these two dimensions, if well understood, meet at the roots, they unite with naturalness on their journey, they join together in the final goal.

They meet at the roots! Is God, the thrice Holy (cf. Is 6:3), not the source of all light for our intellect? Behind our every cultural achievement, if we go to the bottom of things, the mystery appears. Every created reality, in fact, points beyond itself to the One who is its ultimate source and foundation. Man, then, precisely when he is investigating and learning, recognizes his creaturely status, experiences an ever new wonder at the Creator's inexhaustible gifts, and reaches out with his intellect and will to the infinite and the absolute. An authentic culture cannot fail to bear the mark of that healthy restlessness so wonderfully described by St. Augustine in the beginning of his *Confessions*: "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (*Conf.*, I, 1).

Therefore, cultural commitment and spiritual commitment, far from excluding one another or from being in tension with each other, mutually sustain one other. The intellect certainly has its laws and its method, but it has everything to gain from the holiness of the person who is searching. Holiness, in fact, puts the scholar in a condition of greater interior freedom, enriches his effort with meaning, supports his work with the contribution of those moral virtues that mold authentic and mature people. Man cannot be divided! If the ancient motto "*mens sana in corpore sano*" has value, then with all the more reason we can say, "*mens sana in vita sancta*." The love of God, with faithful obedience to his commandments, does not stifle but exalts the power of the intellect, fostering the journey toward truth. Culture and holiness are therefore the "winning" combination for creating that complete humanism of which Christ, revealer of God and revealer of man to himself (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22), is the supreme model. The halls of the Catholic university must serve as a skilled laboratory for this humanism.

NOVEMBER 9, 2000

“The heart of every culture is its approach to the greatest of all mysteries: the mystery of God.”

Only in this absolute verticality—of one who believes and therefore always pursues a deeper knowledge of the truth he has encountered, but also of the one who is searching and is thus on the path of faith—are culture and knowledge illumined by truth and offered to the human being as a gift of life.

The service of the truth is the epoch-making mission of universities. It recalls the contemplative dimension of knowledge which heightens the humanistic feature of every discipline in the areas addressed by your convention. The ability to interpret the meaning of events and to appreciate the most daring discoveries stems from this interior attitude. *The service of truth* is the mark of free and open intelligence. Only by embodying these convictions in his daily activity can the university teacher become a bearer of hope in his personal and social life. Christians are called to bear witness to the dignity of human reason, to its requirements and its capacity for seeking out and knowing reality, thereby overcoming epistemological skepticism, the ideological reductions of rationalism, and the nihilistic dead ends of weak thought.

Faith is capable of generating culture, it does not fear an open and frank cultural confrontation; its certitude has nothing in common with the rigidity of ideological preconception; it is the bright light of the truth that does not oppose the riches of the intelligence, but only the darkness of error. Christian faith enlightens and explains human existence in every context. Urged on by this inner richness, Christians spread it courageously and witness to it consistently.

OCTOBER 5, 2001

Only where there is a commitment to serious and prayerful study is it possible for the “one faith” to penetrate the very marrow of the various cultures, especially in Asia, where ancient religious traditions have profoundly molded people’s character and way of life. It is no small challenge for you to oversee the authentic inculturation of the faith among your flocks (cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 55). *Christianity is a stranger to no culture and to no people*. The proclamation of the Gospel ennobles “those things which every individual, people and nation and every culture throughout history recognizes and brings into being as goodness, truth, and beauty” (cf. John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, no. 18). The Redemptive Incarnation of the Savior enriches the genuine values of every people, enabling them to bring forth new and abundant fruit.

MARCH 11, 1994

Through a lengthy process of reflection the Church gradually becomes aware of all the wealth of the deposit of faith *through the life* of God's people: the process of inculturation is a transition from *implicit lived experience to explicit consciousness*. Similarly, baptized persons, who live Christ's mystery in the Holy Spirit under the guidance of their pastors, are led little by little to discern within the various cultures those elements that are compatible with the Catholic faith and to reject others. This slow maturing process demands great patience and wisdom, great openness of heart, an informed sense of Tradition, and a healthy apostolic daring, like that of the Apostles, the Fathers, and the Doctors of the Church.

Christianity "is a creator of culture in its very foundation" (John Paul II, Address to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [June 2, 1980]). In the Christian world, a truly prestigious culture has flourished throughout the centuries, as much in the area of literature and philosophy as in the sciences and the arts. The very concept of beauty in ancient Europe is largely the result of the Christian culture of its peoples, and its landscape reflects this inspiration. The center around which this culture has developed is the heart of our faith, the Eucharistic mystery.

MARCH 18, 1994

It is necessary to help the laity, and in a particular way the elite, to seek the unity of their existence. “There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual’ life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called ‘secular’ life, that is, life in the family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture” (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 59). A faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully considered or faithfully lived.

APRIL 29, 1994

It is clear that the Christian faith *is not identified with any specific culture*, being above them, even if in fact *it can be embodied in the various cultures*. This means that in every process of catechesis, the divine initiative must be considered, which gratuitously gives faith and fosters the human and cultural expression that transmits it. The Holy Spirit, who “fills the world, is all-embracing, and knows whatever is said” (Wis 1:7), is the one who incessantly gives every culture the grace to accept and live the Gospel.

The embodiment of the faith is not only an inevitable historical necessity but is also a necessary condition that the faith be lived, deepened, and communicated.

APRIL 29, 1993

You do well to reflect upon the *relationship between faith and culture*, since it is proper to culture to be one of the characteristic “places” in which the Word becomes present and active among us. And how great and how many are the needs and urgencies, the difficulties and resistance, but also the sensibilities and willingness for a cultural renewal of this... society, is well known to all of you. *It is urgent that the people of today be reminded of the full truth about themselves*, that which resides in their nature as beings created in the image of God and therefore called to find in him alone their complete response to the hunger and thirst for freedom and solidarity present in their hearts. May your episcopal efforts be expressed with unity of intent, courage of decision, limitless trust in God, and cordial dialogue with the people of our time!

MAY 25, 1995

If communion with God is the source and secret of the efficacy of evangelization, *culture is a privileged terrain on which the faith encounters human beings.*

We cannot agree with those interpretations of freedom that make it a prisoner of itself, closing it off in the domain of the relative and the ephemeral, and suppressing or ignoring *its vital relationship with the truth.*

This is the most important and the most difficult challenge that must be faced by those who wish to embody the Gospel in contemporary culture and society: to make it understood that *the demands of truth and morality do not mortify or destroy our freedom*, but on the contrary allow it to grow and free it from the threats that it bears within itself.

NOVEMBER 23, 1995

Who does not see by now the urgency of a renewed dialogue between faith and culture, made up of both listening and proposal, above all of Gospel witness, capable of setting free the hidden truths, the latent forces in the heart of the cultures? Thus a new generation of believers will be born from the apparent wilderness of God widespread in so many countries that are prey to secularism, *because the yearning for the Absolute is rooted in the depths of the human being, created in the image and likeness of God.*

The challenge of secularism on the threshold of the third millennium is an anthropological challenge. The future of the faith depends to a large extent on the capacity of the Church to respond to this challenge, presenting the great message of the Gospel in a way capable of reaching the very heart of the culture of our time, in all of its various manifestations. Human beings want to realize themselves fully. They have believed, wrongly, that they could arrive at being fully themselves by rejecting God. A secularist vision of the world has mutilated them, closing them off in their immanence. “Without mystery,” Gabriel Marcel rightly said, “life becomes suffocating.” Secularist culture has disrupted social relationships. The presumption of managing society with a purely technological rationality, the primacy of individualist hedonism, the marginalization of the religious dimension from culture have undermined the very foundations of civilization.

The great challenge for the Church is to find footholds in this new cultural situation, as well as to present the Gospel as good news for the cultures, for human beings who are the makers of culture. God is not the rival of humanity, but the guarantor of its freedom and the source of its happiness. God makes human beings grow, giving them the joy of faith, the ardor of hope, the fervor of love.

DECEMBER 2, 1995

“The synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith” (*Letter Establishing the Pontifical Council for Culture*, May 20, 1982; *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, June 28, 1982, p. 7). This is what Christians faithful to the Gospel in the most varied cultural situations have achieved in the course of two millennia. The Church has most often been involved in the culture of the peoples among whom she has taken root, to form them according to Gospel principles.

Faith in Christ who became incarnate in history does not only transform individuals inwardly, but also regenerates peoples and their cultures.

The rupture between the Gospel and culture is “without a doubt the drama of our time” (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 20). This is a tragedy for the faith, because in a society where Christianity seems absent from social life and the faith relegated to the private sphere, access to religious values becomes more difficult, especially for the poor and the young, that is to say, for the vast majority of people who are unconsciously becoming secularized under pressure from the models of thought and action spread by the prevailing culture. The absence of a culture to support them prevents the young from having contact with the faith and from living it to the full.

This situation is also a tragedy for culture, which is undergoing a deep crisis because of the rupture with the faith. The symptom of this crisis is primarily the feeling of anguish which comes from the awareness of finitude in a world without God, where one makes the ego an absolute, and earthly affairs the only values of life. In a culture without transcendence, man succumbs to the lure of money and power, pleasure and success. He also encounters the dissatisfaction caused by materialism, the loss of the meaning of moral values and restlessness about the future.

MARCH 14, 1997

At the end of this century, it is essential to reaffirm the fruitfulness of faith for the development of a culture. Only a faith that is the source of radical spiritual decisions can have an effect on an era's culture.

Faith in Christ gives cultures a new dimension, that of hope in God's kingdom. It is the vocation of Christians to instill in the heart of cultures this hope for a new earth and a new heaven. For when hope fades, cultures die. Far from threatening or impoverishing them, the Gospel increases their joy and beauty, freedom and meaning, truth and goodness.

We are all called to pass on this message by speech which proclaims it, a life which witnesses to it, a culture which radiates it. For the Gospel brings culture to its perfection, and *authentic culture is open to the Gospel*. We will constantly have to return to this work of bringing them together.

MARCH 14, 1997

By its very nature, culture is communication: of individuals with one another and of people with the environment in which they live. Enlightened by faith, culture is able to reflect the individual's dialogue with God in Christ. Faith and culture are thus called to meet and interact precisely in the field of communications. Especially in our time, marked by the development of the mass media, culture is conditioned and, in many respects, molded by these new possibilities of communication. It is important to keep this in mind.

NOVEMBER 25, 1999

The Christian message does not demean cultures by destroying their particular features; on the contrary, it acts within them, making the most of that original potential which their genius can express. The Gospel's influence on culture purifies and uplifts what is human, making the beauty of life, the harmony of peaceful coexistence and the originality that every people contributes to the human community shine resplendently. This influence finds its strength in a love that does not impose but proposes, relying on free assent in an atmosphere of respect and mutual acceptance.

The Gospel message of love liberates human needs and values, such as solidarity, the yearning for freedom and equality, and respect for pluralism in forms of expression. The cornerstone of the civilization of love is recognition of the value of the human person and, concretely, of all human beings. Christianity's great contribution is recognized precisely in this area. In fact, the anthropological doctrine of the human person as a relational being gradually developed precisely from reflection on the mystery of the Trinitarian God and on the person of the Word made flesh. This precious discovery gave rise to the idea of a society which has made the human person its starting-point and goal. The Church's social teaching, which the spirit of the Jubilee invites us to reflect on again, has also helped to base the laws of social coexistence on the rights of the person. The Christian vision of the human being as the image of God, in fact, implies that the rights of the person, by their very nature, demand the respect of society, which does not create but merely recognizes them (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26).

The Church realizes that this doctrine can remain a dead letter if social life is not enlivened by the influence of authentic religious experience, especially by a Christian witness continuously nourished by the Holy Spirit's creative and healing action. She knows that the crisis of society and of contemporary man is largely caused by the reduction of the human person's specific spiritual dimension.

Christianity makes its contribution to building a more human society precisely by providing it with soul and by proclaiming the demands of God's law, on which all social organization and legislation should be based if they intend to guarantee human advancement, liberation from every kind of slavery,

and true progress.

The Church makes this contribution principally through the witness given by Christians, particularly lay people, in their daily lives. Indeed, contemporary man accepts the message of love more from witnesses than from teachers, and if he does accept it from teachers, it is because they are authentic witnesses (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41). This is the challenge to be met so that new horizons will be opened for the future of Christianity and of humanity itself.

DECEMBER 15, 1999

The observation of my predecessor, Pope Paul VI, that “the split between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly the drama of our time” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 20), is manifest today as a “crisis of meaning” (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, no. 81). Ambiguous moral positions, the distortion of reason by particular interest groups, and the absolutization of the subjective, are just some examples of a perspective of life which fails to seek truth itself and abandons the search for the ultimate goal and meaning of human existence (cf. *ibid.*, no. 47). Against the darkness of this confusion the light of the truth which you openly proclaim (cf. 2 Cor 4:2) will shine forth as a *diakonia* of hope, guiding men and women to understand the mystery of their own life in a coherent manner (cf. *ibid.*, no. 15).

JUNE 4, 2004

In societies where faith and religion are seen as something that should be restricted to the private sphere, and therefore as having no place in public or political debate, it is of even greater importance that the Christian message should be clearly understood for what it is: the Good News of truth and love which sets men and women free. When the foundations of a specific culture rest on Christianity, the voice of Christianity cannot be silenced without seriously impoverishing that culture. Moreover, if culture is the context in which the individual transcends himself, then removing the Absolute from that context, or pushing it off to one side as irrelevant, results in a dangerous fragmentation of reality and gives rise to crises, as culture will no longer be able to present to the younger generation the source of meaning and wisdom which it ultimately seeks. For this reason, Christians should be united in *diakonia* to society: in a true spirit of ecumenical cooperation, with your active participation, Christ's disciples must never cease to make present in all areas of life—public and private—the light which the Lord's teaching sheds upon the dignity of the human person.

This is the light of truth that dispels the darkness of selfish interests and social corruption, the light that illuminates the path of just economic development for all. And Christians are not alone in the task of making this light shine ever brighter in society. Together with men and women of other religious beliefs and with people of good will with whom they share common values and principles, your Catholic communities are called to work for the advancement of society and for the peaceful coexistence of peoples and cultures. Thus interreligious commitment and partnership is also an important vehicle for serving the human family. Indeed, when the light of truth is not allowed to shine forth in public debate, error and illusion are easily multiplied and often come to dominate in policy decisions. This situation becomes all the more critical when those who have lost or abandoned belief in God attack religion: a new strain of sectarianism can emerge which is as bitter as it is tragic, adding a further element of divisiveness within society.

MARCH 4, 2003

The drama of contemporary culture is the lack of interiority, the absence of contemplation. Without interiority culture has no content; it is like a body that has not yet found its soul. What can humanity do without interiority?

Unfortunately, we know the answer very well. *When the contemplative spirit is missing, life is not protected* and all that is human is denigrated. *Without interiority, modern man puts his own integrity at risk.*

MAY 3, 2003

A correct understanding of the relationship between culture and Christian faith is vital for effective evangelization.

We see how absolutely essential is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God. It is in this understanding of Christ's uniqueness as the second person of the Blessed Trinity, fully God and fully man, that our faith must be preached and embraced. Any theology of mission that omits the call to a radical conversion to Christ and denies the cultural transformation which such conversion will entail necessarily misrepresents the reality of our faith, which is always a new beginning in the life of him who alone is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).

It must be noted that relativist explanations of religious pluralism, which state that the Christian faith is of no different value than any other belief, in fact empty Christianity of its defining Christological heart: faith alienated from our Lord Jesus, as the only Savior, is no longer Christian, no longer theological faith. An even greater misrepresentation of our faith occurs when relativism leads to syncretism: an artificial "spiritual construct," that manipulates and consequently distorts the essential, objective, revelatory nature of Christianity. That which renders the Church missionary by her very nature is precisely the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 2). This is the foundation of our faith. It is this which makes Christian witness credible. With joy and humility we must welcome the duty that "we, who have received the grace of believing in Christ, the revealer of the Father and the Savior of the world, have to show to what depths the relationship with Christ can lead" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 33).

JULY 3, 2003

Institutes of Consecrated Life have always had great influence in the formation and transmission of culture. This was true in the Middle Ages, when monasteries became places for the study of the cultural riches of the past, and for the development of a new humanistic and Christian culture. The same has happened every time the light of the Gospel has spread to new nations and peoples. Many consecrated persons have been promoters of culture, and frequently have studied and defended indigenous cultures. The need to contribute to the promotion of culture and to the dialogue between culture and faith is deeply felt in the Church today. Consecrated persons cannot fail to feel challenged by this pressing need. In their proclamation of the word of God, they too are called to discover the methods most suited to the needs of the different social groups and various professional categories, so that the light of Christ will penetrate all sectors of society and the leaven of salvation will transform society from within, fostering the growth of a culture imbued with Gospel values.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *VITA CONSECRATA*, NO. 98

Nothing is so devastating in contemporary culture as the widespread conviction that the possibility of attaining truth is an illusion of traditional metaphysics. Activity that benefits culture, one which could be called a “work of intellectual charity,” according to Rosmini’s pregnant expression, is thus more necessary than ever.

The Catholic university, precisely because of its Christian inspiration, has something significant to say in response to this appeal for solidarity made by the culture of our time. In particular, it is called to help overcome that stifling dichotomy between scientific progress and spiritual values which encourages materialistic habits, leading to an individualistic and competitive society that is often the source of injustice and violence, marginalization and discrimination, conflict and war.

MAY 5, 2000

Full cultural development cannot be reached without a religious stance. Culture cannot consist of an agglomeration of practical notions and procedures but implies an organic structuring of these, through which the human person discovers the consistency of the various truths and the hierarchy of values. Now, such a structuring in the full sense is possible only in the light of the source of truth and goodness, which is the Absolute, whom faith calls God. "In your light we see light," says the Psalmist (Ps 36:10).

At the same time, the proposal of faith is also usually embodied in a culture. It is true that God reveals himself with particular tenderness to the simple and to the small. But persons who live in a culturally developed environment, and who have received from God the capacity and the drive for cultural maturation, generally reach the fullness of faith, which is the total and free giving of oneself to God, little by little, as their thirst to understand reality is satisfied, and as the profound meaning of existence is gradually revealed to them. This is the laborious journey that St. Augustine described in a marvelous way in his *Confessions*, through which the soul arrives at drawing from the source of Wisdom, to the point of becoming once again simple and small for the Kingdom of God.

Culture and faith therefore proceed together, they influence each other, until the person reaches the full development that responds to his or her vocation and conforms to the idea that the Creator conceived of him or her from all eternity.

OCTOBER 25, 1986

Room must be made for the responses of our faith as well in the questions that are posed by today's culture, in order to free it from dangerous temptations and naturalistic forms, and reestablish within society the inescapable demands of the spirit. It must be the power of the truth, and no other than that of the word of Christ, that gives the necessary impulse!

This will take place if today as well Christians will confront the problems courageously, drawing upon their faith. The witness of personal life must correspond to that which people expect from them. Overcoming the split between religious belief and everyday activity, accepting the logic of faith, this is our common task. Reinvigorate, then, the certitudes of faith, so that the impact of belief upon life may not fade away.

MAY 24, 1987

I would like to remind you that the Christian presence in the university environment is expressed and passed on through a serious cultural commitment, inspired by the vision of the Gospel.

Faith must generate culture; that is, it must lead us to confront problems and live situations in a way consistent with our Christian conviction. At the same time, faith must manifest itself in a testimony of service, in relation to the many needs that spring up in the environment: from welcoming freshmen and out-of-town students to the various forms of friendship and assistance, especially for the young people who come from faraway regions and countries.

My hope is that this Christian presence in the university, in individual or group form, may be supported by the commitment of the entire ecclesial community. As I recalled six years ago at my encounter with your professors, “the ecclesial community as a whole feels jointly responsible for the promotion of human and evangelical values in the life of your university.”

Dear young people, and all of you who are listening to me, “may Christ dwell in your hearts through faith,” and may you be always “rooted and grounded in love” (cf. Eph 3:17). Make your faith, remaining clear, whole, and firm, manifest itself at every time and in every place as an always renewed testimony of the great love with which we have been loved by the Father, and as the expression of a life rich in meaning and purpose.

JUNE 7, 1988

If it is true that “human beings cannot exist outside of culture,” it is likewise true that they, and they alone, are its creators; they express themselves in it and in it they find their equilibrium. Human beings are always the primordial and fundamental reality in the domain of culture: human beings in their totality, in their complete spiritual and material subjectivity. So there is no true culture without the consideration, complete and in its ultimate consequences, of the human person as a particular and autonomous value, as the subject capable of grasping transcendent reality. How important it appears, therefore, to affirm human persons for themselves and not for any other reason; and how much more necessary does it appear *to love human beings because they are human*, substantiating this love by reason of their particular dignity. “The cause of mankind will be served if science and conscience are allied. Scientists will truly help mankind if they preserve ‘a sense of the transcendence of man over the world and of God over man.’”

APRIL 19, 1991

Culture needs a just freedom with regard to religious faith as well. There are, in fact, *two orders of knowledge*: that of reason and that of faith. The various scientific disciplines have as their object natural phenomena and their interactions. But beyond phenomena, philosophical reason is able to arrive at a certain knowledge of God as the foundation of the universe. Only Divine Revelation, the object of faith, introduces us into the mystery of the very life of God. Both faith and reason refer to *the same primordial Truth*, which cannot contradict itself. Therefore when reason and faith seem to enter into conflict, it must be concluded that either cultural activity or reflection on the realities of faith has exceeded the sphere of its competence, falling short of the demands of its method.

Sometimes in the Christian camp as well, unfortunately, believers have not sufficiently perceived the legitimate autonomy of science and art, giving rise to disputes, controversies, and polemics, which have led not a few persons to believe that science and faith are opposed to one another (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36; also 56, 59). It is to be hoped that this will not be repeated.

On the other hand, it is also legitimate to hope that that negative preconception has been overcome according to which, in the past, there has been no lack of scientists and artists who have assumed a hostile attitude toward religious faith. It is necessary that it be clear to all that *faith does not impose prefabricated results on the researcher*, nor does it intend to modify or integrate on the empirical level the results of his or her studies.

The task and the scope of religious faith are different from this: thanks to the light that it bears, it is possible to penetrate in all its profundity into the meaning of what appears incomprehensible, if not completely absurd, to scientific analysis: death, for example, suffering, evil.

And again: right reason intuits the moral values, and knows that without these human beings end up destroying themselves. Everyone experiences, however, how deeply rooted in the person *wounded by sin* is the inclination to seek the satisfaction of his or her own tendencies independently of [these values].

Why deprive knowledge of the possibility of drawing light from the superior motivations of faith, and above all intimate power from the transcendent

sources of grace?

“The Church,” the Council recalls, “knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart when she champions the dignity of the human vocation, restoring hope to those who have already despaired of anything higher than their present lot. Far from diminishing man, her message brings to his development light, life, and freedom. Apart from this message nothing will avail to fill up the heart of man: ‘Thou hast made us for Thyself,’ O Lord, ‘and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee’” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 21).

AUGUST 17, 1991

No less than in the past, when culture was closely anchored to the deepest human questions in the attempt to fathom their mystery, and constituted the most advanced point of the encounter between reason and faith, today as well culture is called to the encounter with faith. This is a permanent encounter by reason of the respective and distinct areas of competence, but it would not be just (it never has been!) to contrast culture and faith and declare them irreconcilable. It is certainly true that the concept of culture today has become broader, is more articulated and complex with respect to the past; nonetheless, faith has nothing to fear from the encounter with it. It is true, on the contrary, that the Church itself seeks such an encounter, in the conviction that the more culture shows itself to be open to the claims of faith—to which it, in turn, makes a substantial contribution—the more capable it will be of rendering a valuable service to the human person.

The Christian faith has always been a friend of that culture which fosters the comprehensive promotion of the human person, and therefore appreciates and encourages—as confirmed by the two-thousand-year history of the Church—both the humanistic disciplines and the “hard” sciences.

It is close to my heart, therefore, to express once again the hope that mutual respect may increase between faith and science, in order to cooperate in the implementation of the original and providential plan that God the Creator provided for the human person, who is his creature and his child!

APRIL 16, 1988

Faith and Reason

Religious faith itself calls for intellectual inquiry; and the confidence that there can be no contradiction between faith and reason is a distinctive feature of the Catholic humanistic tradition, as it existed in the past and as it exists in our own day.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1987



Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.

FIDES ET RATIO, INTRODUCTION

As we know, reason by its own powers alone has the capacity to demonstrate the existence of God, as the absolute and necessary first principle, and also to know, by analogy, his attributes; the revelation of Christ increases the light proper to natural reason and requires faith in his word. It is therefore necessary to prepare and purify reason, so that it may be well disposed to welcome the “word of God” and to give its assent.

The search for truth in religious matters must be encouraged. This is one of the main tasks of the Catholic educator in today’s world, above all in the public school. In fact, as the Council says, “It is in accordance with their dignity as persons—that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility—that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth” (*Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 2).

So if many do not accept the truth of faith, they can and must be introduced, through a patient and charitable dialogue, to the understanding of spiritual and religious values beginning with evidence from reason, which all of us, believers and nonbelievers, as persons, are capable [of understanding].

MARCH 9, 1985

Through its experience, the Church knows that reason and faith must be connected to one another. *Reason without faith is mere positivism or scientism.* We know that this is not capable of providing answers to the ultimate questions, those that really need answers: the meaning of life, the purpose of creation, and so on. This approach, limited by its own arbitrary presuppositions, has left us a world without unity or harmony.

On the other hand, *faith without reason contradicts the unity of the divine creation*, because God has given us a capacity of understanding that must be exercised as an assent to the results of the investigation of nature or as an assent to the word of God. Reason illuminated by faith does not restrict the field of rational understanding to a limited concept of nature.

We are convinced that it is necessary to respect the legitimate autonomy of human sciences. But we are also convinced that when Christians, *with reason enlightened by faith*, know the fundamental truths about God, man, and the world, they are in a position to have their intellectual efforts produce more abundant fruits of authentic human progress.

Faith does not limit freedom in the pursuit of knowledge. On the contrary, it is its greatest guarantee. This leads us once again to focus our attention on the true significance of freedom in the service of, and the search for, truth.

While faith does not offer solutions for investigation by reason—which follows its own principles and methodologies in different fields and enjoys a legitimate autonomy—nevertheless, faith assists reason in achieving the full good of the human person and of society.

OCTOBER 15, 1988

A specific part of a Catholic university's task is to promote *dialogue between faith and reason*, so that it can be seen more profoundly how faith and reason bear harmonious witness to the unity of all truth. While each academic discipline retains its own integrity and has its own methods, this dialogue demonstrates that "methodical research within every branch of learning, when carried out in a truly scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, can never truly conflict with faith. For the things of the earth and the concerns of faith derive from the same God." A vital interaction of two distinct levels of coming to know the one truth leads to a greater love for truth itself, and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of human life and of the purpose of God's creation.

APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE*, NO. 17

Faith presupposes reason and prizes, strengthens, and spurs it on, as the Magisterium of the Church has emphasized repeatedly (cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer 3015-3019; *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 15).

In the new cultural climate, still to be constructed, there remains open *a great space of dialogue between faith and culture*.

The hoped-for “new alliance” between Church and culture must take on the task of dispelling the shadows and throwing the doors wide open to the light. Also to be considered as a significant “sign of the times” to this end is the promising ecumenical commitment among Christians and interreligious dialogue itself, which calls people of different creeds to work together for the good of humanity. Over the sorrowful memory of the *wars of religion*, *a true night of faith*, is rising the dawn of the hoped-for religious peace, promoter of a harmonious coexistence in civil society as well.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1993

Which of these is the truth? Are reason and faith two realities which are necessarily mutually exclusive?

The split between reason and faith was the expression of one of humanity's great tragedies. It has many causes. Particularly, beginning in the Enlightenment period, an extreme and one-sided rationalism led to the radicalization of positions in the realm of the natural sciences and in that of philosophy. The resulting split between faith and reason caused irreparable damage not only to religion but also to culture. In the heat of controversy it was often forgotten that faith "has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfillment, so faith builds upon and perfects reason" (*Fides et Ratio*, no. 43). Faith and reason are like "two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth" (ibid., Proemium). Today we need to work for a reconciliation between faith and reason. As I wrote in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: "Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so run the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being... The *parrhesia* of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason" (no. 48). Ultimately this is the problem of man's inner unity, ever threatened by the division and the atomization of his consciousness, which lacks a unifying principle. In this area nowadays a special task awaits philosophical research.

JUNE 7, 1999

Man is becoming ever more fearful of the products of his own intelligence and freedom. He feels endangered. Hence it is more important and timely than ever to recall the fundamental truth that the world is a gift of God the Creator, who is Love, and that man as a creature is called to a prudent and responsible dominion over the world of nature, and not its heedless destruction. We also need to remember that reason is God's gift, a mark of the likeness to God which every man bears within himself. Hence it is quite important to remember constantly that authentic freedom of scientific research cannot prescind from the criterion of truth and of goodness. Concern for the moral conscience and the sense of individual responsibility has today become a fundamental imperative for men and women of science. It is precisely here that both the future of contemporary science and, in some sense, the future of humanity are being decided. Finally we need to mention the need for constant gratitude for the gift which each human being is to others; it is thanks to others, with others, and for others that one becomes part of the great adventure of the search for truth.

JUNE 7, 1999

I would like to consider the role that reason plays in the journey of faith. Reason is involved in it in various ways. It is already present as the assent of faith matures, since the latter, although based on the “authority of God who reveals” (First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, DS 3008), develops in a profoundly rational way by discerning the “signs” of God that he himself has offered in salvation history (cf. Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, no. 12). Obviously, it is not a question of “proofs” as understood in experimental science. The signs of God are found instead “within the context of interpersonal communication” (ibid., no. 13) and, according to the logic of the latter, not only appeal to reason, but also call for a deep existential involvement. On this condition, and accompanied by the interior support of grace, they become clear signals, “signposts of the Spirit” as it were, pointing to God’s presence and prompting man to abandon himself to him with complete trust.

Reason’s task then continues beyond this “foundational” level. Mature faith calls on the intellect, employing it—in St. Anselm’s expression—“to seek that which it loves” (ibid., no. 42). Thus faith becomes not only reasonable but “reasoning.” Here is the task that theology is called to fulfill: to gather the data of Revelation and to reflect systematically on them, to delve into their various dimensions, to grasp the harmony between the diverse aspects of truth and, finally, to respond to the ever new challenges posed by culture and history. A vital relationship is thus established between intelligence and faith. It could be said, in fact, that “each contains the other” (ibid., no. 17): on the one hand, we must believe, if we want to perceive something of the mystery that transcends us — “*credo ut intelligam*”; on the other, we must understand— “*intelligo ut credam*”—if faith is to be reasonable and ever more mature.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1999

There is no contradiction between faith and reason, as the experience of the holy Magi shows; they reached Bethlehem using both these dimensions of the human spirit: intelligence that scrutinizes signs, and faith that leads to adoration of the mystery. To face the long and grueling journey in search of the Messiah, reason did not suffice; in order to reach their goal, the Magi also needed faith in the sign of the star. The hope and ardent longing of the Magi were not in vain. They sought the Infant Jesus in Bethlehem and once they had found him, their minds needed faith in order to recognize that the humble Son of man was the Messiah, awaited and foretold by the prophets throughout the Old Testament.

Dear young people, may you always be motivated by the desire to discover the truth of your lives. May faith and reason be the two wings that bear you aloft toward Christ, the truth about God and the truth about man. In Christ you will find peace and joy. May Christ be the center of your entire existence.

MARCH 6, 2005

Faith liberates reason insofar as it allows reason to attain correctly what it seeks to know and to place it within the ultimate order of things, in which everything acquires true meaning. In brief, human beings attain truth by way of reason because, enlightened by faith, they discover the deeper meaning of all things and most especially of their own existence. Rightly, therefore, the sacred author identifies the fear of God as the beginning of true knowledge: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7; cf. Sir 1:14).

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 20

Reason cannot eliminate the mystery of love which the Cross represents, while the Cross can give to reason the ultimate answer which it seeks. It is not the wisdom of words, but the Word of Wisdom which St. Paul offers as the criterion of both truth and salvation.

The preaching of Christ crucified and risen is the reef upon which the link between faith and philosophy can break up, but it is also the reef beyond which the two can set forth upon the boundless ocean of truth. Here we see not only the border between reason and faith, but also the space where the two may meet.

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 23

Faith... has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment, so *faith builds upon and perfects reason*. Illumined by faith, reason is set free from the fragility and limitations deriving from the disobedience of sin and finds the strength required to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God. Although he made much of the supernatural character of faith, the Angelic Doctor did not overlook the importance of its reasonableness; indeed he was able to plumb the depths and explain the meaning of this reasonableness. Faith is in a sense an “exercise of thought”; and human reason is neither annulled nor debased in assenting to the contents of faith, which are in any case attained by way of free and informed choice.

Each [faith and reason] without the other is impoverished and enfeebled. Deprived of what Revelation offers, reason has taken side-tracks which expose it to the danger of losing sight of its final goal. Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition. By the same token, reason which is unrelated to an adult faith is not prompted to turn its gaze to the newness and radicality of being.

This is why I make this strong and insistent appeal— not, I trust, untimely—that faith and philosophy recover the profound unity which allows them to stand in harmony with their nature without compromising their mutual autonomy. *The parrhesia of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason.*

This is the hour of truth for Europe. The walls have fallen, the iron curtains are no longer there, but *the challenge concerning the meaning of life and the value of freedom* remains stronger than ever in the depths of minds and hearts. And how can we not see that *the question about God* lies at the heart of this problem? Either human beings consider themselves created by God, from whom they receive the freedom that opens to them immense possibilities but also presents them with specific duties, or they promote themselves to the level of an absolute, endowed with a freedom that, being devoid of law, abandons itself to every sort of impulse, closing itself off in hedonism and narcissism.

The current climate of anguish and mistrust concerning the meaning of life and the manifest disorientation of European culture urge us to look *in a new way* at the relationships between Christianity and culture, between faith and reason. A renewed dialogue between culture and Christianity will benefit both the one and the other, and the advantage will go above all to human beings, desirous of a truer and fuller existence.

MAY 19, 1996

It is well known that St. Thomas emphasizes the *supernatural* value of faith: this transcends natural intelligence as a “light infused by God” for the understanding of truths that surpass the possibilities and demands of pure reason (cf. II–III, q. 6, a. 1). And yet this is not an *irrational* act, but a vital synthesis in which the principal factor is without doubt the divine one which moves the will to adhere to the truth revealed by God, Sovereign of the intelligence, absolutely infallible and holy.

But the act of faith also includes a *reasonableness* of its own, both in the reference of the believer to the historical evidence for the *matter* in question and in an adjusted valuation of the metaphysical and theological presuppositions that God neither is deceived nor can deceive human beings. Faith also involves its own *rationality or intellectuality*, in that it is an act of human intelligence (cfr. II–II, q. 4, a. 2) and is, in its own way, an exercise of thought, both in the search and in the assent (cfr. II–II, q. 2, a. 1).

The act of faith is thus born from the free election of the reasonable and aware person as a *rationabile obsequium* (Rom 12:1), which is based on a justification of the highest persuasive rigor, the very authority of God as Truth, Goodness, Holiness, coincident with his subsistent Being. The ultimate reason of faith, which is the basis of all Christian anthropology and ethics, is the “*summa et prima Veritas*” (cfr. I, q. 16, a. 5), God as infinite being, for whom Truth is nothing other than another name. Therefore human reason is not destroyed or degraded by the act of faith, but attains its supreme intellectual greatness in the humility with which it recognizes and accepts the infinite greatness of God.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1990

The Catholic university does not differentiate itself, as for the instruments of inquiry, from other universities. However, in carrying out its own rational research, it can count upon a higher light that, without changing the nature of this research, purifies, guides, enriches, and ennobles it. *It is the light of faith, the light of Christ*, who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).

This light is not situated “*outside*” of *rational research*, as a limitation or impediment to it, but “*above*” it, as an elevation of it and a broadening of its horizon: the light of faith opens one to the fullness of the truth, even if this obviously does not exempt the Catholic university from the travail of research, which can be difficult and painful. Light to the aid and to the rescue!

APRIL 25, 1989

Christian Humanism

Human beings need God, because they have been created by God and made for God.

Human beings cannot do without God, in God alone is their salvation. The mission of Christians is precisely this: to help humanity to rediscover God.

OCTOBER 14, 1986



Christian humanism can be offered to every culture; it reveals man to himself in the knowledge of his own value, gives him access to the very source of his existence, the Father Creator, and to living his filial identity in the Only Son, “first-born of all creation” (Col 1:15), with a heart expanded by the breath of his Spirit of love. “With the richness of the salvation wrought by Christ, the walls separating the different cultures collapsed” (Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, no. 70). The folly of the Cross, of which St. Paul speaks (cf. 1 Cor 1:18), is a wisdom and power that surpass all cultural boundaries and can be taught to all nations.

Christian humanism can integrate the best achievements of science and technology for man’s greatest happiness. It also wards off threats to his dignity as a person who is the subject of rights and duties, and to his very life, so seriously challenged today from conception to the natural end of his days on earth. For if man leads a human life thanks to culture, there is no truly human culture that is not of man, through man, and for man, that is, for every individual and for all men and women. The most genuine humanism is revealed to us by the Bible in God’s plan of love for man, a design which became even more wonderful through the Redeemer. “In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22).

NOVEMBER 19, 1999

Knowledge enlightened by faith, far from abandoning areas of daily life, invests them with all the strength of hope and prophecy. The humanism which we desire advocates a vision of society centered on the human person and his inalienable rights, on the values of justice and peace, on a correct relationship between individuals, society, and the State, on the logic of solidarity and subsidiarity. It is a humanism capable of giving a soul to economic progress itself, so that it may be directed to “the promotion of each individual and of the whole person” (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, no. 14; and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 30).

SEPTEMBER 9, 2000

Rooted in the perspective of truth, *Christian humanism* implies first of all an openness to the Transcendent. It is here that we find the truth and the grandeur of the human person, the only creature in the visible world capable of self-awareness and recognizing that he is surrounded by that supreme Mystery which both reason and faith call God. What is needed is a humanism in which the perspectives of science and faith no longer seem to be in conflict.

Yet we cannot be satisfied with an ambiguous reconciliation of the kind favored by a culture which doubts the very ability of reason to arrive at the truth. This path runs the risk of misconstruing faith by reducing it to a feeling, to emotion, to art: in the end stripping faith of all critical foundation. But this would not be Christian faith, which demands instead a reasonable and responsible acceptance of all that God has revealed in Christ. *Faith does not sprout from the ashes of reason!*

SEPTEMBER 9, 2000

Faith and the Family

The family nucleus must act as a faithful transmitter of human values and of the Christian faith.

JUNE 5, 1992



Nothing can better prepare the future of the third millennium than the formation of many families in their faith. The adherence to Christ of those who will be living then is already in gestation today in the womb of Christian families.

The Christian family, as a “little Church,” is called to generate faith in its members and to transmit it effectively from generation to generation. In order to reach this goal, it bases itself on the vocation that the Creator “has entrusted to it from the beginning, and on the sacramental grace with which Christ, the Redeemer, has enriched it to make it capable of fulfilling the fundamental mission assigned to it in service of man, of society, and of the Church” (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 13).

The transmission of the faith is a task connected essentially to the vocation of Christian marriage, every marriage being by its constitution oriented to the generation and education of the offspring. Education is, in a certain way, the normal and necessary continuation of the generation of life. This is why parents are, by right and by duty, the “first and principal educators of their children” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, no. 3; *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 36; *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, art. 5). Education, which is a gradual process with different stages in harmony with the growth of the person, includes not only the intellectual elements, but also the cultivation of the moral attitudes and spiritual values that constitute the most noble and profound reality of the human being. It therefore includes in a very special way, when the parents are believers, the transmission and instruction of the faith, the religious dimension of human beings that puts them in contact with God himself, the origin, foundation, and end of all of their life, and with Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer. There is no greater good that parents can transmit to their children than that of a deep faith.

Because of the special characteristics of faith—which is definitively and always a gift from God—the duty of parents concerning its transmission is essentially based on the power of their testimony in the domain of the family. The primary task of pastoral care for families will be that of helping parents to deepen their faith in such a way that it may come to permeate the different expressions of family life.

Christian spouses and parents are required to offer “the obedience of faith.” They are called upon to welcome the Word of the Lord which reveals to them the marvelous news—the Good News—of their conjugal and family life sanctified and made a source of sanctity by Christ Himself. Only in faith can they discover and admire with joyful gratitude the dignity to which God has deigned to raise marriage and the family, making them a sign and meeting place of the loving covenant between God and man, between Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO*, NO. 51

Certainly one area in which the family has an irreplaceable role is that of *religious education*, which enables the family to grow as a “domestic church.” Religious education and the catechesis of children make the family a true *subject of evangelization and the apostolate* within the Church. We are speaking of a right intrinsically linked to the *principle of religious liberty*. Families, and more specifically parents, are free to choose for their children a particular kind of religious and moral education consonant with their own convictions. Even when they entrust these responsibilities to ecclesiastical institutions or to schools administered by religious personnel, their educational presence ought to continue to be *constant and active*.

LETTER TO FAMILIES, NO. 16
FEBRUARY 2, 1994

It is necessary that the Christian faith penetrate that community which is the family.

Without imposing your faith, and in respect for others, live out “the Christian difference,” and may the Catholic imprint appear not only in individual behaviors, but in the fabric of community and collective life: in the family, in business, in entertainment, in politics. There is a way of being and acting that must influence the structures of society. Do not take refuge within a false humility that would consist of remaining silent about the content of the faith or making its public expression disappear. Live in conformity with the demands of Christianity, and you will become witnesses of Love. Seek out, together with all the others, the ways of human progress for all, so that all persons may be recognized in their dignity.

MAY 2, 1989

It is precisely in the family and through the family that the important question of the *inculturation of the faith* can be posed, in function of the experience of everyday reality. The affectionate relationships of the family, the attention its members dedicate to one another, especially to children and the elderly, the solidarity that connects the family to the wider community, its love and profound respect for life that is coming to an end and being born, all of this constitutes fertile terrain in which the spirit of the Gospel can generate a splendid flowering of the spirit of the beatitudes. When the traditional values of the family are purified, elevated, and transformed by the encounter with the Gospel of life, the Catholic community rediscovers the essential dimensions of Christian fraternity and love, which are opposed to the excessive individualism of secularized societies.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1995

The Church finds itself today encountering an ever more secularized and complex society, no longer structured on religious values and instead marked, especially in some nations, by notable indifferentism. This certainly does not favor an effective presentation of the faith to the new generations, and instead obstructs their achievement of an authentic meaning of life.

It thus happens that, even in families in which the parents profess and live the Christian faith, adolescents feel the pull of the environment, the school, the means of communication, toward perspectives of life that are different from those presented to them in the family. This *makes the transmission of the faith* and intergenerational dialogue itself *difficult*, even when young people, because of a lack of jobs, are forced to prolong their dependence on their parents.

Your reflection is intended to clarify *the specific and original way* in which the family is called to take an active and responsible part in the mission of the Church in transmitting the faith. This mission is in itself only one, but it branches out into separate tasks and modalities, according to the different vocations. It falls in a special way upon the pastors, chosen to feed the flock of the Lord as ministers and dispensers of the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor 4:1) and to be its guardians and guarantors in communion with each other and with the Successor of Peter.

The Christian family also has, in this regard, its own specific task. By virtue of its *particular vocation and mission*, it is called to transmit the faith in a unique and original way, *complementary to that of the pastors*. Wherever this function proper to the family nucleus is lacking, the very evangelizing mission of the Church comes to lack an *irreplaceable component*. The “intimate community of life and love” (*Familiaris Consortio*, no. 50), which is the context proper to the family, is rooted in the sanctifying presence of Christ, who, recognized, welcomed, and celebrated in prayer and in the sacraments, becomes spiritual nourishment, bond of unity, and proclamation of truth. In this way, the faith is lived and transmitted *in communal form*: “As a sharer in the life and mission of the Church, which listens to the word of God with reverence and proclaims it confidently, the Christian family fulfills its prophetic role by welcoming and announcing the word of God: it thus becomes more and more each day a believing and evangelizing community” (*Familiaris Consortio*, no. 51).

SEPTEMBER 29, 1995

The transmission of the faith within the family presupposes in its members *an intense Christian life*, which is translated into everyday *witness*, made up of concrete and ordinary actions, of attention to the other and to the domestic community as a whole.

Therefore, the spiritual life of the family needs to be supported with *specific means and special modalities*: first of all, *constant contact with the Christian community, with the parish*, and with the opportunities that this offers for the nourishment of faith. To be emphasized in particular is the importance of *keeping Sunday holy*: on this day, the family can renew itself at the springs of the Word and the Sacraments. The family, in fact, although being Church, is not self-sufficient as to the means of salvation. “The Eucharist,” I wrote in the *Letter to Families*, “is truly a wondrous sacrament.... It is for you, dear husbands and wives, parents and families!” (no. 18). The various forms of parochial *catechesis* or participation in movements of *spirituality* are, moreover, necessary not only for children and young people, but for spouses first of all.

It is also important that *significant moments of faith* be lived *within the walls of the home as well*. “The bridegroom”—Christ—“is with you,” I wrote to spouses in the same letter (*ibid.*). On the basis of this certainty, the Christian family is able to create simple but intense occasions: meditating together on a page from Scripture, reading a Psalm, reciting the Rosary while meditating on the mysteries of the Lord and of the Holy Family. The *sanctification of work*, domestic and external, finds interior support in these precious pauses that culminate in the spiritual offering of the Sunday Mass.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1995

Consider how important it is for you *to foster the life of faith and the life of grace in yourselves and in your children.*

No treasure is as uplifting and transforming as the light of faith.

From many points of view, these are difficult times for parents who wish to pass on to their children the treasure of the Catholic faith. Sometimes you yourselves are not sure what the Church stands for. There are false teachers and dissenting voices. Bad examples cause great harm. Furthermore, a self-indulgent culture undermines many of the values which are at the basis of sound family life.

There are two immediate things which the Catholic families of America can do to strengthen home-life. *The first is prayer:* both personal and family prayer.

The second suggestion I make to families is to use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to learn about the faith and to answer the questions that come up, especially the moral questions which confront everyone today. Dear Parents, you are *educators because you are parents.*

OCTOBER 7, 1995

Faith and Education

Culture is hope, and the Christian becomes its interpreter, promoting a dialogue that is straightforward, truthful, positive, trusting.

JANUARY 24, 1987



Today the world has need, on the one hand, of teachers endowed with powerful ideas that can restore human beings to their original place, and, on the other, of trainers rich in creativity for overcoming the growing distance between human civilization and Christian faith, and restoring the alliance between science and wisdom. At the same time, knowledge must be enriched, charitable action encouraged, and interior life revived.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1988

Your presence will have an impact if it is supported by a living faith; a faith that, received in Baptism, may grow and mature, with divine grace, through the sacraments, prayer, personal and communal exploration of the word of God, in particular through the “study” of the life, the figure, the message, the “mystery of Christ,” Redeemer of humanity and of history!

An authentic faith will give rise to a life that, in love for others, will be able to demonstrate its absolute and unconditional love for God, the giver of every good.

The world of education expects this testimony of yours; it demands it, because it wants to see in you the consistency between faith and life, between the Christian message and its historic and concrete realization, which must be demonstrated by all those who bear the name of Christian.

MARCH 27, 1987

There is no contradiction, but rather a logical connection, between freedom of research and recognition of truth. It is to truth that all research looks, albeit with the limitations and fatigue of human thought. This is an aspect which needs to be underlined, lest we succumb to the climate of relativism to which a large part of today's culture falls prey.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2000

With its humanistic aspects, Christian faith can make an original contribution to the life of the university and to its educational task, to the extent that Christian witness is borne by energetic thought and coherency of life, in a critical and constructive dialogue with those who promote a different vision.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2000

Religious education in Catholic schools refers to the integral education of the pupils, both through the religious dimension of the school as a whole and through the specific program of religious studies which it provides. This religious education is broader than catechesis, but it must also include catechesis, *since a principal goal of the Catholic school must be to hand on the faith*. The Gospel is the living center which must animate and shape all that is said and done in the school. In such an environment, the pupils will be able to find the true inspiration and freedom which alone will encourage them to set out wholeheartedly on the path of service of God and neighbor.

MARCH 26, 1992

Faith and Catechesis

Catechesis will be more successful if it shows itself open to the encounter among faith, culture, and science, for a mutual integration respectful of the competencies of each.

OCTOBER 29, 1988



Catechesis is born from faith and it serves faith. And thus it is precisely this that must accompany the whole life of the Christian, in conformity with the different stages of that road which is life, with the different tasks and commitments, with the multiple situations through which this road winds. This means making it possible for the “word that comes forth from the mouth of God” (cf. Mt 4:4) to reach human beings continually, and not “return empty” (cf. Is 55:11), but show itself constantly fruitful *in the various aspects of human life.*

DECEMBER 19, 1984

There is also a pedagogy of faith, and the good that it can do for catechesis cannot be overstated. In fact, it is natural that techniques perfected and tested for education in general should be adapted for the service of education in the faith. However, account must always be taken of the absolute originality of faith. *Pedagogy of faith* is not a question of transmitting human knowledge, even of the highest kind; it is a question of communicating God's revelation in its entirety. Throughout sacred history, especially in the Gospel, God Himself used a pedagogy that must continue to be a model for the pedagogy of faith. A technique is of value in catechesis only to the extent that it serves the faith that is to be transmitted and learned; otherwise it is of no value.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *CATECHESI TRADENDAE*, NO. 58

When educating children, adolescents and young people, let us not give them too negative an idea of faith—as if it were absolute non-knowing, a kind of blindness, a world of darkness—but let us show them that the humble yet courageous seeking of the believer, far from having its starting point in nothingness, in plain self-deception, in fallible opinions, or in uncertainty, is based on the word of God who cannot deceive or be deceived, and is unceasingly built on the immovable rock of this Word. It is the search of the Magi under the guidance of a star, the search of which Pascal, taking up a phrase of St. Augustine, wrote so profoundly: “You would not be searching for me, if you had not found me.”

It is also one of the aims of catechesis to give young catechumens the simple but solid certainties that will help them to seek to know the Lord more and better.

CATECHESI TRADENDAE, NO. 60

Undertaking a renewed, effective catechesis that will illumine the faith one professes as well as encouraging a more widely attended liturgy to help the faithful put their whole heart into living and celebrating it, are unavoidable challenges, if all believers are to progress toward holiness and one is to bring close to the Gospel those who have fallen away from or show indifference to the saving message of the Gospel.

“It is urgent to rediscover and to set forth once more the authentic reality of the Christian faith, which is not simply a set of propositions to be accepted with intellectual assent. Rather, faith is lived knowledge of Christ, a living remembrance of his commandments, and a truth to be lived out” (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 88).

SEPTEMBER 21, 2001

The understanding of faith focuses its gaze directly on the truth of Revelation; at first glance, it encounters it in a privileged way in the domain of epistemology; in the second, in that of Christology.

I urge you, my dearest, to make special room for the *pedagogy of faith*, exploring the expressions that this has taken over the course of the centuries.

It is up to you to find the reasons why Revelation, above all today, should be perceived in its evident *credibility*, when it presents the love of God crucified and risen, the true and only source of all authentic love. The search for the conditions under which human beings pose on their own the first fundamental questions about the meaning of life, about the purpose they wish to give it, and about what is waiting after death, constitutes for fundamental theology the necessary *preamble* so that, today as well, the faith may fully display the path to a reason sincerely searching for the truth. In this way faith, a gift from God, while not being based upon reason, certainly cannot do without it; at the same time, there appears the necessity for reason to strengthen itself with faith, in order to discover the horizons it could not reach on its own.

Every form of theology, in order to be fruitful, must be cultivated *in the Church*, in harmony with it and in service to it. The balance laboriously struck by the holy Fathers between faith and reason should not have to waver irreparably toward extreme forms, in order not to humiliate either faith or reason, as unfortunately has sometimes happened in the history of theology. It is therefore urgent that adequate expressive forms be found so that in a modern language, without ever betraying the truth expressed by the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church, the people of our time may also be presented with the great treasure of Christian Revelation.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1995

Christian life is not built on a mere sociological attitude, nor on the knowledge of a few rudiments of the Christian message that would not lead to participation in the life of the Church. It would be a sign that faith had remained totally outside people. Pastors and catechists will also remember that children and young people are particularly sensitive to the consistency between people's words and their actual life. Indeed, how can young people become aware of the need to take part in the Sunday Eucharist or the practice of the sacrament of Penance if their parents or teachers do not themselves lead this type of religious life in church? The more in tune the witness of faith and morals is with the profession of faith, the better young people will understand how Christian life brightens the whole of life and gives it its strength and depth. Daily witness is the seal of authentic teaching.

FEBRUARY 20, 2004

The Christian community also plays a role in the educational process. It is responsible for passing on the Christian values and making known Christ as a person who calls each one to a more and more beautiful life and to the discovery of the salvation and happiness that he offers us. May Christians never shrink from proclaiming to the new generations Christ, the source of hope and light on their journey! May they also be able to welcome teenagers and their families, to listen to them and help them, even if this may often be very demanding! It is the business of all Christian communities and of society as a whole to educate the young.

JULY 3, 2004

Dear educators in the faith: before the stupendous panorama of a world to be catechized, in order to bring it close to Christ; before so many adults, young people, and children yearning for a self-donation faithful to the cause of the Gospel, *with what vigor and with what conviction* resound in our encounter the words of the Apostle: “If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it” (1 Cor 9:16). May God grant that these words remain deeply inscribed in your hearts, dear brothers and sisters.

The Apostle continues: “If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship” (1 Cor 9:17).

Yes, this is a matter of a task entrusted to administrators. Remember this expression: “dispensers of Divine Revelation.” And since this Revelation proceeds from the benevolence of God toward human beings, then indirectly you too are *dispensers* of that benevolence, of that *eternal* love. You must pray and strive in order that your students in the faith may accept from you *not only the word* of revealed truth, *but also this love* from which Revelation is born and in which it is expressed and realized.

This is why the Apostle then writes to those who carry out the service of dispensers: “What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel” (1 Cor 9:18). Because the Gospel grants them the right to support, since spiritual service takes up all of their time and consumes all of their energy. Nonetheless, *the greater recompense*, according to the Apostle, lies in *being able to proclaim the Gospel*. Being able to be dispensers of the Words and of the Love of God, to be coworkers and apostles of Jesus Christ.

You, “educators in the faith,” carry out a special service to *Divine Revelation*, drawing inspiration from this eternal benevolence that resides in God himself.

You are at the same time *disciples and apostles of Christ*. To him, precisely to him “all things have been handed over” by the Father (Mt 11:27). In him the Father has manifested all that needed to be revealed to humanity from the treasury of his divine benevolence:

“No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father

except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt 11:27).

Dear brothers and sisters: *The Son desires to reveal to you* all of the truth of the love of God, so that you may proclaim it to others, because you are educators in the faith.

Every Christian must take part in the task of Christian formation. He or she must feel the urgency of evangelizing: “If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me” (1 Cor 9:16).

This task is especially important and urgent today, so that every Christian may be helped to maintain and to develop his or her faith at this juncture of rapid social and cultural transformation that society is experiencing.

This is why we must enhance education in the faith, imparting a thorough religious formation; establishing an *organic connection* between childhood, youth, and adult catechesis, accompanying and promoting growth in Christian faith over the whole lifespan. Because Christian and ecclesial “immaturity” cannot withstand the impact of an increasingly secularized society. The Christian faith, in effect, involves for the believer a search for and personal acceptance of the truth, overcoming the temptation of living in systematic doubt, and knowing that his or her faith, “far from having its starting point in nothingness, in plain self-deception, in fallible opinions or in uncertainty, is based on the word of God who cannot deceive or be deceived” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 60). For this reason, catechesis must also give “the simple but solid certainties that will help them to seek to know the Lord more and better” (ibid.). This must open for Christians the new perspective that embraces and orients all of their existence, offering them with the Christian program “reasons for living and hoping” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 31). In this regard, at the present moment Christian educators can find their place of honor, directing their efforts to the comprehensive formation that provides the trustworthy answers that Revelation offers with regard to the meaning of humanity, of history, and of the world (cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, no. 28).

Although education in the faith is a task that embraces all of life, there are moments of the Christian process that require particular attention, like those of Christian initiation, adolescence, the choice of a state [in life], and other circumstances of great significance in personal life; after a religious crisis or painful experience. They are moments that should be followed with greater care in order to allow everyone to hear God’s call (cf. Mt 11:28).

In order to be able to offer this practical assistance to education in the faith,

it is necessary and indispensable that catechists and educators receive a solid formation in biblical, theological, and anthropological studies, and be taught *in the first place to live this faith in person*, in order to catechize others with words and above all with the comprehensive profession of faith taken on as a way of life.

This attitude demands complete self-donation to the experience of the faith, and to the service of the faith itself and of others. The Apostle therefore emphasizes: “Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible” (1 Cor 9:19). By using the word “slave,” St. Paul brings to the forefront the total self-donation to the service of the faith and of those who serve. His own words are even more eloquent: “To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all” (ibid., v. 22). The Apostle is a realistic man; he understands that all of his toil produces only partial fruits. But nonetheless he gives himself completely: “All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it” (ibid., v. 23).

Yes, the Gospel is not only transmitted, but one participates in it. Those who most participate in it also transmit it in the most mature manner; and those who transmit it most generously participate in it most deeply. Ultimately the proclamation of the Gospel, the service of the faith, is *bringing Christ close to people and bringing people close to Christ*. It is then that his words are fulfilled: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

There is no doubt that the parish must continue its privileged mission of formation in the faith; there is no doubt that parents must be the first catechists of their children. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the transmission of the message of salvation through religious instruction in the schools, private and public. This teaching must be imparted with due discretion, with full respect for freedom of conscience, but at the same time respecting the primary right of the parents, the primary educators of their children.

For their part, Catholic teachers and educators can have, even in the religious field, a task of primary importance. Many parents rely on them, and the Church relies on them for this comprehensive formation of children and young people, on whom it absolutely depends whether the future world will be closer to or farther away from Jesus Christ (cf. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, no. 81).

NOVEMBER 5, 1982

The spirit of faith is essential for every Christian catechist. The search for and development of more suitable methods would not be enough if these were not animated by such a spirit of faith. The scientific aspects of pedagogy would not be able to make up for a lack of faith. In reality, it is faith that drives the catechist to seek out the best method for presenting and transmitting doctrine. It is faith that forms the soul of catechesis and inspires all of the efforts of pedagogy in religious instruction.

JANUARY 16, 1985

I urge you to make the most of the content of the religious spirit transmitted to you by the past generations, and to translate it into the “religion that is pure and undefiled” (Jas 1:27), which draws necessary nourishment from catechesis and from sacramental practice, and preserves from the contaminations of evil.

It is necessary to overcome that prejudicial misunderstanding according to which faith is simply a personal matter of the individual. Faith indeed makes its nest in the conscience. But precisely for this reason it inspires—it must inspire—consistent practice and behavior. Between faith and life runs an indissoluble relationship.

MAY 9, 1986

Faith and Young People

Young person, believe and you will live!

*Young person, believe and stake everything on love! Young person, believe
and decide this very day to build in your life an eternal edifice!*

JUNE 7, 1992



Young people must be encouraged to trust in the capacities of intelligence and reason. And this in regard to religious faith as well, the soundness of which can be presented to us by reason, according to the famous expression of St. Augustine: "I would not believe, if I did not know that I could and must believe."

A religious adherence based on the shifting sands of an irrational and sentimental fideism not only is not worthy of the human person, but is destined not to withstand the onslaught and the corrosive doubts of certain segments of contemporary culture.

MARCH 13, 1986

With the sacrament of Confirmation, you as well, who have come to know the Christ and have been grafted onto him in one body through Baptism, are now called to “speak” of him, to be his *courageous witnesses* in the defense of the faith and in the practice of Christian life in a world that sometimes shows itself indifferent in the face of religious and moral issues. You are brought into close relationship with the mission of the Son: you are “seized” today by the Holy Spirit, who gives you the “power to express yourselves,” to proclaim to every man, to every woman, in every circumstance in which you find yourselves, your faith in God, in Jesus the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

Understand your vocation, therefore, and may you be heralds of new life, a reason for vigorous hope for the whole Church. Understand that as of today, the mission of the Church, of the Apostles, of the disciples, continues and is realized in you, and finds its way through you. With you, the Church fulfills its commitment to be ever more active in building up faith and charity.

Make room for the Holy Spirit. Allow yourself to be guided by his manifold action. He, the Spirit of Christ, knows what he wants to make of you, and as for you, allow yourselves to be led by him.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1988

May you be *young people of faith!* Of true, of deep Christian faith!

May your faith, O young people, be sure, meaning founded on the word of God, on a thorough understanding of the message of the Gospel, and especially of the life, person, and work of the Christ; and likewise on the interior testimony of the Holy Spirit.

May your faith be strong; may it not hesitate, may it not waver in the face of the doubts and uncertainties that philosophical systems or fashionable ideas may wish to suggest to you; may it not be compromised by certain conceptions that would like to present Christianity as a simple ideology of a historical character, and therefore to be placed on the same level as so many others that are now outdated.

May your faith be joyful, because it is based on the awareness of possessing a divine gift. When you pray and dialogue with God, and when you interact with human beings, you manifest the gladness of this enviable possession.

May your faith be active, may it manifest itself and become concrete in practical and generous charity for your brothers and sisters who are burdened down with suffering and want; may it manifest itself in your serene adherence to the teaching of the Church, Mother and Teacher of truth; may it express itself in your availability for all of the initiatives of apostolate, in which you are called to participate for the expansion and construction of the kingdom of Christ!

OCTOBER 5, 1980

Christianity, O young people, brings completeness and fulfillment to your personality: centered as it is on the figure of Christ, true God and true Man, and as such Redeemer of man, it opens you to the consideration, to the understanding, to the savoring of all that which is great, beautiful, and noble in the world. Adherence to Christ does not compromise, but expands and ennoble the “promptings” that the wisdom of God the Creator has placed in your souls. Adherence to Christ does not mortify, but strengthens the sense of moral duty, giving you the desire for and satisfaction in striving for “something that really matters,” and protecting the spirit against the tendencies, not rarely springing up in the youthful spirit today, of “letting oneself go,” either in the direction of an irresponsible and lazy abdication, or in the way of blind violence and homicide. Above all—remember this always—adherence to Christ will be the source of an intimate joy that the world cannot give and that—as he himself announced beforehand to his disciples—no one will ever be able to take from you (cf. Jn 16:22).

This joy, as the fruit of a personal faith and—as I have said—“of contact” with Christ, as an ineffable gift of his Spirit, is intended to be the point of arrival of my present talk with you. *Christianity is joy*, and those who profess it and make it shine through in their lives have the duty of bearing witness to it, of communicating and spreading it around themselves.

APRIL 13, 1980

In a society that often experiences profound tragedies in a context of distrust, hedonism, and violence, you must make felt the beauty of faith, of friendship, of solidarity and service, as also the ideal of a total consecration to Christ and to humanity.

May you always be consistent with your principles and with your identity: may there be continuity between faith and life, between Christian thought and practical action. May your conduct be upstanding, inspired by true fidelity to the Church and to your country, free from the influence of cultural or customary models that are apparently innovative but in reality anchored to conformism. In this way you will be capable of arriving at true inner freedom, worthy of strong people who never betray their loyalty to God, to Christ, to the Church and its pastors, in generous fulfillment of the promises and in a constant effort to break through the boundaries of mediocrity and opportunism; and may you work together with the other Catholic associations and movements to inspire today's society with Christian principles.

In this way you will indeed change the world for the better: in favor of justice and peace, of solidarity and the promotion of every person. This will be the best argument on behalf of your movement and will lead to the complete realization of your motto, "*Estote Parati*," because you are living an evangelical existence "with your loins girded and your lamps lit" (cf. Lk 12:35).

AUGUST 9, 1986

I know the objections that are raised against faith in today's world, and you hear them as well. They are formulated by those who live beside you, your companions at school, work, and leisure. Do not allow yourselves to be frightened, do not give up your convictions; do not barter the ideals that have been transmitted to you by those who have experienced the authenticity of the faith.

Faith does not diminish human dignity; on the contrary, it furnishes our intelligence with the elements required to respond fully to the questions that assail us. Faith leads us to know the ultimate truth about things, about persons, and about God. It does not draw us away from the world, from our brothers and sisters; on the contrary, it brings us even closer to their problems and their hopes. Sincere faith in the Redeemer does not isolate us, it does not distance us from the world and from the human race; on the contrary, it "contributes greatly to the promotion of this communion between persons, and at the same time leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has written into man's spiritual and moral nature" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 23).

JANUARY 26, 1990

Seek the time and the means to understand your faith, to acquire this “clear sight” that will allow you to make your life’s journey in the bright light of day. Question your parents, your teachers, and your pastors. Open yourselves to the message that they transmit to you.

The Gospel is a great spiritual power: you must accept it, live it, and radiate it. It is a leaven: mixed into a great mass of dough, it ends up leavening it all. Jesus also compares the Kingdom of God to a man who finds a hidden treasure, to a seller of fine pearls. The treasure and the pearl are sought and prized above all else. One clings to them as to an absolute, ready to sacrifice everything else. They become the goal and the motivation of life.

The hidden treasure is Christ, discovered by means of faith. It is his Person, mysterious but present and alive, of which one becomes fond in different ways as of a friend. It is his Spirit. It is his message. It is his law. It is the values of the Kingdom.

OCTOBER 15, 1989

Discover your Christian roots, learn about the Church's history, deepen your knowledge of the spiritual heritage which has been passed on to you, follow in the footsteps of the witnesses and teachers who have gone before you! Only by staying faithful to God's commandments, to the Covenant which Christ sealed with his blood poured out on the Cross, will you be the apostles and witnesses of the new millennium.

It is the nature of human beings, and especially youth, to seek the Absolute, the meaning and fullness of life. Dear young people, do not be content with anything less than the highest ideals! Do not let yourselves be dispirited by those who are disillusioned with life and have grown deaf to the deepest and most authentic desires of their heart. You are right to be disappointed with hollow entertainment and passing fads, and with aiming at too little in life. If you have an ardent desire for the Lord you will steer clear of the mediocrity and conformism so widespread in our society.

For those who first heard Jesus, as for us, the symbol of light evokes the desire for truth and the thirst for the fullness of knowledge which are imprinted deep within every human being.

When the light fades or vanishes altogether, we no longer see things as they really are. In the heart of the night we can feel frightened and insecure, and we impatiently await the coming of the light of dawn. *Dear young people, it is up to you to be the watchmen of the morning* (cf. Is 21:11-12) who announce the coming of the sun who is the Risen Christ!

The light which Jesus speaks of in the Gospel is the light of faith, God's free gift, which enlightens the heart and clarifies the mind. "It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). That is why the words of Jesus explaining his identity and his mission are so important: "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12).

Our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in new light, sets us on the right path, and sends us out to be his witnesses. This new way of looking at the world and at people, which comes to us from him, leads us more deeply into the mystery of faith, which is not just a collection of theoretical assertions to be

accepted and approved by the mind, but an experience to be had, a truth to be lived, the salt and light of all reality (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 88).

In this secularized age, when many of our contemporaries think and act as if God did not exist or are attracted to irrational forms of religion, it is you, dear young people, who must show that *faith is a personal decision which involves your whole life*. Let the Gospel be the measure and guide of life's decisions and plans! Then you will be missionaries in all that you do and say, and wherever you work and live you will be signs of God's love, credible witnesses to the loving presence of Jesus Christ. Never forget: "No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a bushel" (Mt 5:15)!

JULY 25, 2001

Today on all continents, the young are living in difficult situations, influenced by materialism, cultural changes, family divisions, violence in all its forms, the lack of moral and spiritual standards. In your educational missions, together with the lay people who collaborate in your institutions, it is important that you offer a scientific, human, moral, and religious training of high quality, thereby giving young people the chance to build up and structure their personality and to overcome the problems they encounter, enabling them to envisage a more peaceful future. Do not be afraid to suggest the path of faith and to pass on joyfully the Lord's call to the priesthood or to the consecrated life. It is also important that adults help young people to discover the beauty of that specific call which is Christian marriage. They expect their elders to show them the paths of holiness.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2001

Dear young people, make the apostolic faith of the Church your own! *Remain united with your pastors*, listen to them, meet with the priests in the parishes and schools. Under their guidance may you deepen your knowledge of Christ, may you be assiduous in listening to the word of God, in prayer, in the practice of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance.

When *faith* is a personal adherence to Christ and to the Gospel, it is embodied in life. This is what Jesus says: “Whoever loves me will keep my word” (Jn 14:23). Observing the word of the Lord means realizing the mission that has been entrusted to us.

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21). This *mandate* concerns every Christian, each one of you!

Dear young people, your task is that of reviving the enthusiasm of a former time. Jesus trusts in you. Through you he wants to reach every social environment and transform it with the power of his truth and love. In this mission you are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with you.

Only one who is enlivened within by the Spirit and behaves as a child of God can be a seed of new life. Open yourselves therefore, dear young people, to this divine breath, to this participation in the life, in the love of God!

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, who enlivens the mystical body of the Church. In order to be animated by the *Spirit*, one must remain united with the Church. Those who want to oppose the Church in the name of the Spirit are deluding themselves. Only those who love the Church and work for its unity are moved by the Spirit of God and walk according to the Gospel.

JUNE 30, 1995

From every corner of the world the Church sees advancing a new generation thirsting for truth, freedom; and happiness: dear young people, you long for an interior life and dialogue with Christ. You seek authentic teachers and witnesses to show you the way of truth and love. You sometimes ask yourselves: “Who will teach us to pray? Who will introduce us into the life-giving mystery of the Good News?” Look at all those who have gone before you on the arduous and exciting path of faith and holiness. They will help you share that same witness to faith which has marked their life.

To strive for holiness, to follow Jesus on the demanding way of the Gospel, is a fundamental aspect of every Christian life—as you well know. What is holiness if not entering into a deep relationship with God, Trinity of love, and growing in intimacy with Christ, Son of God incarnate? And does not true self-discipline contribute to strengthening the person’s interior being as well as his integral growth?

AUGUST 3, 1997

Training Young People in the Faith

I encourage the Church in Europe to give greater attention to the training of young people in the faith. As we look to the future, we cannot but think of them: we need to make contact with the minds, the hearts, and the character of the young in order to provide them with a sound human and Christian formation.

Wherever many young people are present, it is hard not to perceive the wide variety of their attitudes and approaches. We can see their desire to be together and to come out of their isolation, and their thirst, recognized in differing degrees, for the absolute; we see in them a secret faith needing to be purified and desirous of following the Lord; we become aware of their decision to continue the journey already begun and the need to share their faith.

To this end, there is need for a renewed youth ministry, organized by age groups and attentive to the varying situations of children, adolescents, and young adults. It will also be necessary to provide this ministry with a more organic structure and consistency, and to be patiently concerned with the questions raised by young people, in order to make them protagonists of the evangelization and the building of society.

In this process opportunities should be provided for encounter among young people, so as to foster a climate of mutual listening and prayer. There is no need to fear making demands upon them with regard to their spiritual growth. The way of holiness should be pointed out to them and they should be encouraged to make demanding choices in their following of Jesus, drawing their strength from an intense sacramental life. In this way they will learn to resist the enticements of a culture which often proposes values which are merely superficial or even contrary to the Gospel, and become capable of demonstrating a Christian approach to every sphere of human life, including entertainment and leisure.

I can still see clearly the joyful faces of so many young people, the true hope of the Church and of the world and an eloquent sign of the Spirit who unceasingly causes new energies to arise. I have met them during my travels to various countries and during the unforgettable World Youth Days.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *ECCLÉSIA IN EUROPA*, NOS. 61-62

May you always have before your eyes the luminous face of Christ, who calls you to be authentically free and protagonists of your existence. His Passion, Death, and Resurrection are an eloquent reminder to confront deliberately and with maturity the obstacles and challenges of life, knowing well that the risen Lord is the “eternal King who has overcome the darkness of the world.” He alone is the Truth, the Way, and the Life.

Human beings, in spite of the marvelous capacities that distinguish their intelligence, are able only to stammer when it comes to defining the ultimate meaning of existence and the authentic end of living and dying. Scientific and philosophical research, if it is conducted in a way that is honest and open to the truth, leads almost naturally to opening the heart to the mystery of the transcendent God, thus finally discovering adequate answers. Christ comes to satisfy our thirst for the infinite with his word of salvation. He became incarnate in order to illuminate our existence.

MAY 2, 1998

You young people ask me *how it is possible, today, to live as Christians* in a context that seems dominated by a culture of suspicion, desperation, and death, with the inevitable consequences, which are well known to you, of inner emptiness and indifference that accompany it.

Dearest, the Lord Jesus has prayed for us, that we may be “in” the world, but not “of” the world. This means that faith, made ever more personal, free, and solid, *puts the believer in the condition of rowing against the tide* and of confronting the risk of being misunderstood and even mocked. You must not let this scare you. Make an effort to love even those who seem enemies to you; *may you be unyielding, however, when it comes to defending the truth.*

And may you also be convinced of the value that the Christian faith has *for the earthly city*. Adhering to Christ does not mean suffocating the authentic human virtues, but rather purifying and exalting them. *The more Christian you are, the more authentically human you will be.*

MAY 5, 1996

Today it is the young themselves who ask for the Gospel to be sown in their hearts in a new way. It is they who repeat to us, at times very insistently, their impatient desire to hear the “Good News.” Yes, dear Brothers, we feel the urgent need to present to the new generations the only Redeemer of humanity, Jesus, who, being God, out of love willed to enter into the wounds of history even to the point of experiencing abandonment on the Cross.

As we face the absence of values and the profound existential questions that challenge contemporary society, we must proclaim and witness that Christ took upon himself the questions, expectations, and even tragedies of humanity in every age. With his Resurrection, he made completely possible the realization of that desire for life and for eternity that lies deep in the heart of every human being and especially the hearts of the young.

APRIL 25, 2002

“You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14). This is Jesus’ other message to his disciples. The characteristic of light is to dispel darkness, warm what it touches, and enhance its contours. It does this at high speed. Therefore, for Christians and especially for young Christians, being the light of the world means spreading everywhere the light that comes from on high. It means fighting the darkness that is due to the resistance of evil and sin, and that caused by ignorance and prejudice.

Young people, be rays of Christ’s light. He is the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12). Radiate this light everywhere, especially where Jesus is not known and loved, or even where he is rejected. With your lives, make people understand that the light which comes from on high does not destroy the human being: on the contrary, it exalts him, just like the sun, whose brilliance throws into bold relief shapes and colors. *God is not man’s rival* but his true friend, his most faithful ally.

You must promote this message with the speed of light! Do not waste time: your youth is too precious to waste even the smallest part. God needs you and calls each one of you by name.

MAY 5, 2002

It is true, sometimes life is not easy, peppered as it is with questions and anxieties. In the face of events that shake the conscience and call upon faith, one feels *the difficulty of providing an answer*. When, for example, the mass media draw the attention of world public opinion to the tragedy of hunger and drought in extensive regions of the world, the death of innocent children by malnutrition and illness, the account of interminable wars that mow down countless human lives, the figures on environmental pollution that alters the ecological balance, the unjust oppression of the weak and the apparent triumph of the wicked, one asks oneself *where the loving face of God may be hidden*. One asks oneself why many, through no fault of their own, should be victims of natural disasters or human selfishness.

Within you as well there may appear *dark and indecipherable moments*. You ask yourselves about the meaning of existence, about the future of humanity and about your personal future. You reflect on the mystery of God and on the mystery of man, without being able to find satisfying answers around you. The temptation of abandonment and discouragement is not far away. The risk is that you may make yourselves comfortable in mass conformism, giving in to the allure of the artificial paradises of drugs or the seductive call of alienating and often violent ideologies.

Listen, young people, in the silence of your hearts to the question that becomes an imploring prayer: "O God, who are you for me? And who am I for you?" And open your hearts to trust: "Be not afraid, because serving Christ and his Church completely is a stupendous vocation and a magnificent gift. Christ will help you."

MARCH 19, 1990

In embracing faith and allowing themselves to be loved by Christ the Redeemer, human beings do not flee from themselves and from others, but find themselves in themselves and in others, because they find in the Father of life the fundamental element that makes all of us brothers and sisters: the image of God impressed by the Creator from the very beginning, and renewed by the Savior after sin. In the light of faith, each one of you can *look at the other as one looks at an icon, as at least a potential depiction of Christ.*

So remain firm in the faith! Live it with simplicity and serenity. Allow Jesus Christ himself to define your existence and guide your decisions, so that the relationships among you may correspond always or without break or deviation to the model of charity that is the heart of Christ.

JANUARY 26, 1990

It sometimes happens that one encounters paradoxical situations: people of faith who do not have hope, people of hope who do not have faith. These are situations spoiled by an intrinsic contradiction: without faith it is not possible, in fact, to cultivate a hope capable of standing up to the disappointments of experience, and above all to the final inevitability of death. Did not St. Paul describe the pagans simply as “the rest, who have no hope” (1 Thes 4:13)? But it must be said with equal clarity that it is not possible to believe in Christ without this faith blossoming in a hope so luminous that it is able to light up and guide every human affair.

Young people, if your faith is so firm as to make you encounter the risen Christ in the concreteness of everyday life, you will be able to bring to your friends a proclamation of hope capable of reviving even a heart threatened and suffocated by disappointment, by skepticism, by desperation.

If you have faith, dearest young people, you will be able to convince those around you that hope does not mean indulging in the illusion of a dream; but on the contrary, it is the means for turning a dream into reality. The dream is that of a world of brothers and sisters living in joyful and productive harmony. The reality is the family that Christ assembles every day around the Eucharistic table, on which he renews his redemptive sacrifice. May you be witnesses of this reality in every environment, and especially in that of education; you will be men and women of hope for the future of this world, which Christ has loved to the point of shedding his blood for it.

FEBRUARY 25, 1984

Yes to faith, yes to life. You recognize this principle as well: that a generous “yes” to the Christian faith is the purest source for a fullness of life, even for a busy young life.

Those who allow themselves to be saved by the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ discover the deep and intimate joy of being *in peace with God* and with themselves. In fact, they have the faith and the constancy necessary to overcome the difficulties of their lives. Since they know their eternal vocation and carry within themselves the courage and nobility of spirit of the faith, they also have the strength and a system of values to work in a just way for peace on earth.

You are saved people: this truth will be developed in your lives in different ways. You have been saved for faith and for faithful friendship with God in Jesus Christ. Allow this faith to grow within you just as you grow and mature in body and soul. A deliberate “yes” to the common faith of the Church, to unity with the pope and the bishops will help you, amid the confused variety and the controversies of today’s religious literature, to find the right path and to recognize what faith is truly able to build and explore. Mature adherence to Christ must be aware of the dynamics of the most important problems and of the responses of Christian teaching.

Faith is certainly not a blind sentiment, but a conscious adherence to the call of God. In his letter, the Apostle Peter also calls upon us: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Pt 3:15).

JUNE 26, 1988

Faith validates the meaning of being young, it does not stifle it. So be not afraid of adhering to Christ. Everything you are seeking that is great and good, you will find it in him. Because Christ is the light in the absolute sense: he dispels all darkness, tears down uncertainties, overcomes doubts, guarantees the greatest achievements.

Christ gives a precise meaning to the religious sensibility that is not lacking among modern youth, at a time in which we are witnessing the twilight of the ideologies.

Christ enriches with content and with vigor those humanitarian messages which are sometimes thought to exhaust the religious phenomenon.

Christ confers concreteness on the generic need for transcendence that sprouts amid the ruins of crumbling materialistic conceptions.

Christ offers sure and stable foundations to anyone who decides to build the edifice of his or her existence not on shifting sands, but on solid rock.

There is no young man or young woman today who cannot find in the Christian message good leavening for his or her spirit. There is no disappointment, dissipation, or sin that cannot be overcome in Christ; just as there is no yearning, need, or hope that, placed within the orbit of Christ, Lord and Redeemer, does not receive the benefits desired.

It is true, Christ is demanding. He asks for everything. He calls for unconditional generosity. But it is precisely through this totality that Christianity remains a religion that is always relevant and is destined to find full agreement with the youthful conscience, which is inclined to the totality of self-donation, a stranger to half measures, hostile to formalism and superficiality.

To young people, Christ opens an immense horizon. He reveals to them the relationships that run between eternity and time, between the future and the present life. He shows them that there is a profound connection between truth and goodness, and that therefore the moral level of an existence essentially depends on the capacity for consistency, which has its roots in depths of the mind and the heart.

The Christian vocation, dear young people, needs to be manifested outwardly as well, first of all in the world of your peers, because through it you may be able to receive the word of Christ and understand all of its charm. It

needs to expand into every area of community life, so that your participation in the joys and hopes, in the sadness and distress of the people of today may be translated into your concrete support for the great values to which you are particularly sensitive: respect for human life from its very first moment, freedom, honesty, fraternity and justice, peace.

May you also have a solid ecclesial conscience.

Belonging to the Church, in its local and universal expressions, is an immense gift and a fertile resource.

The Church—and you know this!—has no demagogic intentions or plans, but only the ambition of loving and serving, according to the mandate entrusted to it by Christ for all people and for all times.

The more it reflects upon itself, as it did during the Council and as it still does in the light of that great event, the more it discovers its vocation to the service of humanity.

From daily dialogue with its divine Founder, and trusting in his promises, it receives the strength it needs to navigate with the boldness of the first apostles upon the currents of history.

The younger generations must feel profoundly involved in this action of the Church. With prayer, with Eucharistic life, with devotion to Mary, with the exercise of grassroots and organized apostolate, with the activity of catechesis and evangelization, you must shine forth that light which the Church has placed in your minds.

FEBRUARY 26, 1984

This is the dominant concern in each one of us: How can we bring with renewed efficacy *the proclamation of Christ to the contemporary world* profoundly marked by secularism and indifferentism? How can we present *to young people in particular* the radical message of the Gospel, in which alone is offered the fully satisfying response to their restless hearts?

It must be explained to young people who are seeking that only Jesus is capable, through the “leaven” of his Gospel, of realizing completely the human values to which they aspire. Young people already situated in the Christian experience must be helped to appreciate the importance of *recognizing each other and working together*, above all when they are in contact with their peers who are far from or on the edge of life and the Christian experience.

We must have the courage to propose and re-propose to the young people of today the Christian ideal in its completeness. Experience teaches that their spirit is open to the appeal of authentic values, for which they are willing to face even serious sacrifices, when they are helped to understand the reason for them in the Christian logic of the Cross. We must attain *a mature faith* that becomes missionary passion.

FEBRUARY 16, 1991

Faith and Suffering

Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence.

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 16



Faith alleviates suffering, but not so much in the sense of reducing it physically. This is the task of medicine, or it can take place exceptionally in a miraculous way.

Faith alleviates suffering in that it makes it *acceptable* as *means of expiation* and as *expression of love*.

FEBRUARY 11, 1988

More than anything else, it is the problem of suffering which challenges faith and puts it to the test. How can we fail to appreciate the universal anguish of man when we meditate on the Book of Job? The innocent man overwhelmed by suffering is understandably led to wonder: “Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures?” (Job 3:20-21). But even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to a trusting and adoring acknowledgment of the “mystery”: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).

ENCYCLICAL *EVANGELIUM VITAE*, NO. 31

Seen with the eyes of faith, suffering, although it can still appear as the most obscure aspect of the destiny of human beings on the earth, nonetheless provides a glimpse of the mystery of Divine Providence, contained in the revelation of Christ, and in particular in his Cross and Resurrection. Without a doubt, it can still happen that, posing themselves the ancient questions about evil and suffering in a world created by God, human beings may not find an immediate response, especially if they do not possess a living faith in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. Gradually, however, and with the help of faith nourished by prayer, one discovers the true meaning of the suffering that each one experiences in his or her life. It is a discovery that depends on the word of Divine Revelation and on the “word of the Cross” (cf. 1 Cor 1:18) of Christ, who is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24). As Vatican Council II says: “Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His gospel, they overwhelm us” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22). If we discover through faith this power and this “wisdom,” we find ourselves on the salvific paths of Divine Providence. It is then that the meaning of the Psalmist’s words are confirmed: “The Lord is my shepherd... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Ps 22[23]:1, 4). Divine Providence thus reveals itself as God’s walking beside human beings.

JUNE 11, 1986

At times the Christian religion is presented as a religion of pure resignation, of passive acceptance, which would diminish the human person, or even as a religion exclusively centered on suffering, which would obscure the horizon of human thought and life. On the contrary, the religion of the risen Christ *is a proclamation of life*: it develops with the new life of Christ all of the energies of the person, and bears witness that *suffering is a passage to a greater joy*.

It is the event of *the Resurrection* that gives the Christian religion its authentic face.

JUNE 25, 1990

The unconditional choice for life reaches its full religious and moral meaning when it flows from, is formed by and nourished by *faith in Christ*. Nothing helps us so much to face positively the conflict between death and life in which we are engaged as faith in the Son of God who became man and dwelt among men so “that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). It is a matter of *faith in the Risen Lord, who has conquered death*; faith in the blood of Christ “that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” (Heb 12:24).

With the light and strength of this faith, therefore, in facing the challenges of the present situation, the Church is becoming more aware of the grace and responsibility which come to her from her Lord of proclaiming, celebrating, and serving the *Gospel of life*.

Faith Is Strengthened When It Is Given Away

There is a need to acknowledge and defend the right of believers to bear public witness to their faith. Authentic religious practice cannot be reduced to the private sphere or narrowly restricted to the edges of society.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2001



“Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!” Yes, missionary activity offers us an extraordinary opportunity to rejuvenate and render more beautiful the Bride of Christ and, at the same time, it enables us to experience a faith that renews and strengthens our Christian life, precisely because it is given.

However, the faith which renews life and the mission that strengthens faith cannot remain as hidden treasures or as an exclusive experience of isolated Christians. Nothing is further from the mission than a Christian closed in on himself: if his faith is solid, it is sure to grow and must open out toward the mission.

MAY 19, 1991

Faith is “preserved” by being given (Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 2). It is Paul’s teaching. This took place when on Pentecost the disciples left the Upper Room and, driven by the Holy Spirit, went out in every direction. The evangelizing mission continues in time and is the normal way in which the Church handles the treasure of faith. We must be active participants in this spiritual energy.

JUNE 29, 2001

The Church is constantly in need of evangelizing itself in order to continue evangelizing others. This is why it is necessary that faith become even more personal, more adult, and more committed, in order to renew missionary dynamism, and also in order to confront the growing materialism of the social environment, to resist the allure of the sects and the sorcerers, and not to give in, wherever economic conditions allow it, to the desire for profit, which constitutes an obstacle to every truly serious Christian life.

Evangelizing, which means proclaiming the faith, nourishing it, supporting it, deepening it, making it bear fruit through adequate catechesis: all of this requires a sufficient number of apostolic workers.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1988

Evangelization means accepting God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ. It involves *accepting in faith what God has revealed to humanity*, accepting the truth about the Crucified and Risen Christ (as we say in the Creed, "He was crucified, suffered death and was buried; on the third day, he rose again").

It is a question then of a *faith accepted with the heart* (with the intellect and will), a faith rooted in our inmost depths. And then, *it is professed with our lips and with our works*. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:13).

Such faith *helps us to look at the world in a new way*, to look at all that surrounds us in a new light. It enables us to see the whole of creation as *the handiwork of God, his gift*.

Faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ also *inspires us to transform the world in the Spirit of God*. But first it means a transformation of the human heart, which has its consequences in society and in relationships between individuals and nations.

Evangelization *begins in the human heart*, in that intimate dialogue between each of us and God, where we recognize our sins and acknowledge our need for a Savior, where we come to believe and profess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But faith can never remain a purely private matter.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1988

The living transmission of the faith is today one of the important tasks of the Church. This is not only a matter of keeping the faith genuine, but also of transmitting it such that hearts are set on fire by the joyful news, and human beings recognize that in this way their lives draw forth clarity and strength for a living union with God and also for service of their neighbor and a Christian organization of society.

We love the understanding of the faith, because in it we love the faith itself; faith is understanding which is born from love. And this is always and in every case a matter of personal encounter with Jesus Christ. This is decisive, in you yourselves and also in the priests and teachers and in all of the faithful entrusted to you. Being guardians of the faith means being guardians of the life that Christ brings to us, of life in its fullness (cf. Jn 10:10).

JUNE 24, 1988

Today even in a land like Italy, profoundly marked by two thousand years of Christian tradition, the faith is not a secure possession and a common patrimony; it is a seed that is threatened and often smothered by the multitude of worldly concerns and the deception of wealth, as Jesus warned in explaining the parable of the sower (Mt 13:22). At the same time, it reveals itself ever more clearly as the precious pearl (Mt 13:45-46) that nothing can replace: the rapid decline of the ideologies that promised to give a complete answer to the question of meaning, to the need for fraternity and hope that is in the human heart, has laid bare, for those who have eyes to see, that there is no substitute for Jesus Christ and that the attempt to replace him is an arduous and impossible enterprise.

But it is above all the moral dimension of the faith, the truth of Christian ethics, that is threatened and contested today. Too often, and sometimes even by those who consider themselves members of the Church and identify themselves as Christians, this is judged as outdated and no longer suited to the current situation. This sets up, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the premises for the destruction of that which is most authentically human, and the renunciation of the possibility of building a society and a civilization to the measure of man.

The task of evangelizing and inculturating the faith belongs to the whole Church, and the laity are called to participate in it as full-fledged members, in intimate communion and fruitful collaboration with the pastors whom God has established to rule his Church.

JANUARY 7, 1989

Proclaiming Christ and bearing witness to him, when done in a way that respects consciences, does not violate freedom. Faith demands a free adherence on the part of man, but at the same time faith must also be offered to him, because the “multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ—riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth.... This is why the Church keeps her missionary spirit alive, and even wishes to intensify it in the moment of history in which we are living.” But it must also be stated, again with the Council, that “in accordance with their dignity as persons, equipped with reason and free will and endowed with personal responsibility, all are impelled by their own nature and are bound by a moral obligation to seek truth, above all religious truth. They are further bound to hold to the truth once it is known, and to regulate their whole lives by its demands.”

REDEMPTORIS MISSIO, NO. 8

Training for an Adult Faith

“Europe’s cultural and religious situation today calls for the presence of Catholics who are adult in their faith and for missionary Christian communities who testify to God’s love before all mankind.” The proclamation of the Gospel of hope thus implies a concern to foster the movement from a faith supported by social tradition, important as this is, to a more personal and adult faith, one marked by knowledge and conviction.

Christians are therefore “called to have a faith capable of critically confronting contemporary culture and resisting its enticements; of having a real effect on the world of culture, finance, society, and politics; of demonstrating that the fellowship between Catholics and other Christians is more powerful than any ethnic bond; of joyfully passing on the faith to new generations; and of building a Christian culture ready to evangelize the larger culture in which we live.”

What do we mean when we talk about “maturity” *of faith*? This certainly implies acceptance of the gift of grace, free personal choice, awareness of truth, openness to the celebration and praise of God, overcoming every fracture between faith and life in the service of charity and in the commitment to justice, responsible involvement in building up the fabric of the ecclesial communities, generous and consistent communication of one’s own experience of faith in missionary activity, determined participation in the inculturation of the faith, impassioned presentation and organization of hope in the current social and political reality.

Behind each of these expressions of Christian maturity lies that complete dedication of personal and community existence that in the Gospel takes on the form of following Jesus.

MAY 14, 1992

With the “new evangelization,” we intend to *set out on the journey toward destinations of maturity*: our primary pastoral objective is that of building mature Christian communities and helping Christians to grow in an adult faith, which means Christians in communities able to be witnesses in the world of the transcendent truth of the new life in Christ.

Maturity of faith is a response to the demands of the times. And this rightly so, because the task of the Church in history is to discern the signs of the times, to respond to the appeals that call it to live in fidelity to its Lord, always more deeply but also in ways ever more understandable to the people of today (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4)

But the tension toward the maturity of faith does not depend solely or even primarily on the demands, as important as they are, of historical circumstances. It is in fact *connatural with the very dynamism of the Christian life*. According to its inner nature, faith demands complete openness on the part of the believer to an ever more profound rooting and an ever wider expression, following the dynamism of the Spirit himself, who is the inexhaustible source of life and fullness (cf. Rom 8:1-17). The life of the Christian and that of the community of faith, germinal incarnations of the Kingdom of God, need by their very nature to set free from the tiny mustard seed the potentialities of the great tree (cf. Mt 13:31-32).

MAY 14, 1992

Being disciples of Christ is not a private matter. On the contrary, the gift of faith must be shared with others. For this reason the same Apostle writes: "If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!" (1 Cor 9:16). Moreover, do not forget that faith is strengthened and grows precisely when it is given to others (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 2).

Therefore, testify to your faith through your involvement in the world too. A disciple of Christ is never a passive and indifferent observer of what is taking place. On the contrary, he feels responsible for transforming social, political, economic, and cultural reality.

NOVEMBER 24, 1991

Believers need to have a vigorous sense of their apostolic vocation. This presupposes their personal and profound contact with Christ, Prince of Peace. To this end, we must work actively for *a New Evangelization*, proclaiming to the people of today the Good News of salvation in a credible and audacious way. Our contemporaries need hope, they are thirsty for love, they are seeking paths that may lead them to the truth. But will they find peace if they do not encounter Christ? You feel with urgency the task of the New Evangelization. Especially in this phase of history, which has seen the rapid collapse of the ideologies, you are asking yourselves about how to proclaim the Gospel in fidelity to the mandate of Christ: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). So then, venerable brothers, if the task appears demanding and arduous, may you be sustained by the promise of the Redeemer himself: “Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (ibid.).

In order for the faith to become culture and therefore life, it is not enough that it be given an abstract proclamation. The believer and the entire community must be able to implement a *concrete companionship with the human person* on the journey of history. In other words: the *inculturation of the faith* must be the pastoral priority at every level and in all areas of society, especially those of humanitarian and public activity. In this ecclesial effort, the parish remains the constant point of reference and center of the proclamation, celebration, and witness of faith.

MARCH 16, 1991

Look at Christ, our model and teacher: he went “working and teaching” (cf. Acts 1:1). He reminds all of us of our duty of fidelity to the vocation we have received from God and to the commitments we have personally taken on in Baptism. In order to carry this out, we are constantly enriched with grace upon grace.

I call to your memory in this circumstance that only one thing is necessary: the consistency with our being Christians, the fidelity of the love with which God has loved us first and awaits our love. The truth is that we have all been called— let us not be afraid of this word!—to holiness (and *today’s world has such need of saints!*), a holiness cultivated by all, in the various ways of life and in the different professions, and lived according to the gifts and responsibilities that each has received, advancing without hesitation on the way of living faith, which ignites hope and works through charity (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 41).

JULY 10, 1980

The Church transmits a “living” faith to the world, for when she preaches, teaches, or baptizes, *Christ is made present in that event*. Thus the Gospel to be proclaimed is ever new, touching each successive generation with freshness and vitality and calling each person to a relationship with Christ that is deeply personal. And this dynamic quality of the Gospel never ceases, for the believer is called to a *continual change of mind and heart* in order to conform more faithfully to the mind and heart of Christ. At the same time, what a tremendous privilege is bestowed upon those who are called to be heralds of the Gospel! What extraordinary satisfaction is discovered in communicating Christ to another!

FEBRUARY 23, 1981

If our faith in the Risen Lord is alive, the soul will be full of joy and the mission will take the form of an “overflow” of joy which impels us to bring to everyone the “wonderful news” of salvation with a courage free of fear and doubt, even at the cost of giving our lives.

“You will be my witnesses.” The words of Jesus to the Apostles before the Ascension tell us how to go about *evangelization* in every age, but they are particularly apt for today. We live in a time in which there is an excessive use of the spoken word by the communications media which have so great an impact on public opinion for better or worse. The word which we need to use is one that is rich in wisdom and holiness. For this reason, in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, I wrote, “all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness” (no. 30), cultivated by listening to the word of God, by prayer and by being centered on the Eucharist, which is at the heart of the celebration of Sunday as the *Day of the Lord*. The message of Christ will have an impact on our world only through the witness of believers who live the Gospel in a radical way.

MAY 24, 2001

The missionary task must first consist in helping the faithful strengthen their faith in Christ the Savior, so that confronting the many demands that we made on them, they are not tossed about by every wind of doctrine but, living in truth and love, are built up in every way into Christ (cf. Eph 4:14-15). May they all find strength to persevere on the paths of the Gospel and its demands in their attachment to Jesus and in their community's support. May they remember that "no one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:62)!

JUNE 16, 2001

Just as it once did, *the vocation to witness* spurs on and binds the believer to work ceaselessly for the spread of the Gospel. No one can think that the faith is a reality acquired and taken for granted, a definitively consolidated presupposition. It is constantly brought into question by the evolution of culture and by ideological and moral situations that gradually unfold over the course of the years. It must, therefore, be always preached, carefully meditated on, and evaluated against the demands and expectations of the human person.

MAY 15, 1993

The Council makes reference to the words of Jesus Christ on the indispensable missionary task entrusted to the Apostles. He, expressly dwelling upon the need for faith and Baptism (cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5), has at the same time confirmed the role of the Church, into which it is necessary to enter and persevere if one wishes to be saved (cf. *Ad Gentes*, no. 7). This necessity of faith received through the preaching of the Church, in the order of salvation, is not only a theological deduction, but is a doctrine revealed by the Lord. From it stems the urgency of missionary action for the preaching of the Gospel and the conferral of Baptism, which assures entrance into the community of the Church. This traditional doctrine of the Church reveals the inconsistency and superficiality of a relativist and irenic attitude concerning the way of salvation in a religion different from that founded on faith in Christ.

MAY 10, 1995

Every Christian is continually invited to *deepen his faith*; this will help him to come closer to the risen Christ and to be his witness in society. In fact, in a world where people do not cease to improve their scientific and technical knowledge, knowledge of the faith cannot remain merely the catechism learned in childhood. To grow humanly and spiritually, the Christian has an obvious need for ongoing formation. Without this, he risks no longer being enlightened in the sometimes difficult choices he must make in his life and in carrying out his specific Christian mission among his brothers and sisters. For as one of the most ancient patristic texts says, “What the soul is to the body, Christians are in the world.... So noble is the position to which God has assigned them that they are not allowed to desert it” (*Letter to Diognetus*, no. 6).

Thus I encourage all Christ’s disciples to respond to your appeals and to take the time to develop their Christian life and their understanding of the faith. The Christian must be aware of this primary truth: God made man in his image and gave him the power to rule over creation, to put it at his service and to glorify the Creator. In creating him a rational being, he also gave him the possibility of reaching a form of rational knowledge of God, who, in addition, then invites him to follow a journey of faith.

FEBRUARY 1, 1997

We need to bear witness to God in word and deed everywhere, in every place: in the family, in the workplace, in offices and schools. In places where people work and where they rest. We need to profess our faith in God by taking an active part in the life of the Church; by concern for the weak and suffering, and also by taking responsibility for public issues, in a spirit of concern for the future of the nation, built on the truth of the Gospel. Such an attitude requires a mature faith, a personal commitment. It needs to express itself in concrete actions. At times, an attitude like this must exact a price in the heroism of complete self-denial. In our times and in our lives too, have we not experienced different kinds of humiliation in order to maintain our fidelity to Christ and thus to preserve our Christian dignity? *All Christians are called, always and wherever they are placed by Providence, to acknowledge Christ before men* (cf. Mt 10:32).

JUNE 2, 1997

More than ever now there is a need for a genuine witness of faith, made visible through the life of the lay disciples of Christ, men and women, young and old. There is a need for committed witness to fidelity to the Church and responsibility toward the Church, which for twenty centuries has brought salvation to every people and nation, announcing the immutable teaching of the Gospel. Humanity now faces difficulties of various kinds, problems, and violent changes; often it knows dramatic convulsions and lesions. In such a world, many people, especially the young, feel lost and wounded. Some fall victim to sects and travesties of religion, or to manipulations of the truth. Others succumb to different forms of slavery. Attitudes of selfishness, injustice, and insensitivity to the needs of others become more widespread.

The Church faces these and other challenges of our time. It wants to offer people effective help and therefore needs the commitment of lay faithful who, under the guidance of their Pastors, must take an active part in the Church's saving mission.

The new evangelization needs true witnesses of faith. It needs people rooted in the Cross of Christ and ready to accept sacrifice for the sake of the Cross. Authentic witness to the life-giving power of the Cross is given by those who, in its name, overcome in themselves sin, egoism, and every evil, and want to imitate the love of Christ to the very end.

As in the past, the Cross must continue to be present in our lives as a clear pointer to the path to follow and as a light which illumines our whole being. May the Cross, the very form of which unites heaven and earth and men among themselves, flourish in our land and become a great tree laden with the fruits of salvation. May it bring forth new and courageous proclaimers of the Gospel, who love the Church and take responsibility for the Church, true heralds of the faith, a breed of new men. May they be the ones to light the torch of faith and to carry it burning brightly across the threshold of the third millennium.

JUNE 10, 1999

Man is justified before God through faith. The justice that saves man does not derive from the effects of law, but from faith, that is, from the attitude of total openness and full acceptance of God's grace, which transforms the human being and makes him a new creature.

The act of faith is not simply an intellectual adherence to the truths revealed by God, but neither is it merely an attitude of confident entrustment to God's action. Rather it is the synthesis of both these elements, because it involves both the intellectual and the affective realm, as an integral act of the human person.

These reflections on the nature of faith have immediate consequences on the way of working out, teaching, and learning theology. If, in fact, the act of faith that leads to man's justification involves the whole of the person, theological reflection on divine Revelation and on the human response cannot but take due account of the multiple aspects—intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual—which intervene in the relationship of communion between God and the believer.

Through faith, man welcomes the salvation which the Father offers him in Jesus Christ. The man to whom the Lord gives salvation is truly blessed (*response, responsorial psalm*); the hearts of those who are at peace with God overflow with joy: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Ps 32[31]:11).

The harshness of refusing to recognize one's own faults and the inability to accept God's gift are defined by Jesus as "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Lk 12:1). With these words, Jesus censures not only false attitudes and the search for appearances, but the presumption of being just in themselves, precluding every possibility of genuine conversion and faith in God.

The act of faith considered in its integrality must necessarily be expressed in concrete attitudes and decisions. In this way it becomes possible to overcome the apparent antithesis between faith and action. Faith understood in the full sense does not remain an abstract element, uprooted from everyday life, but involves all a person's dimensions.

Whether excluded or silenced, God is there, and an ardent longing for him is still present in the hearts of many. For, in the end, man cannot be content with what is merely human. He seeks a truth that transcends him. Even if without a clear perception, man searches for this truth, because he realizes that therein lies the meaning of his life. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross expressed this insight in a saying: “*Whoever searches for the truth, is searching for God, whether he knows it or not.*”

Answering the God-question is a great opportunity for the Church. So open the Church’s doors to everyone who is sincerely searching for God! Whoever asks the Church about truth should expect that the word of God written and handed on will be reliably and completely explained to him (cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 10). In this way the search for truth is protected from the dangers of a confused, irrational, and syncretistic religiosity, and the Church of the living God will be seen as “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tm 3:15).

The truth of faith must be matched with authenticity in life.

NOVEMBER 15, 1999

Witness of life, of course, has primary importance in the proclamation of the Gospel. Nevertheless, it will always be inadequate “if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 22).

This clear announcement is necessary to move hearts to adhere to the Good News of salvation. Those who proclaim it are rendering an immense service to men and women seeking the light of truth.

FEBRUARY 6, 2004

Confessing Our Faith

From the synodal Assembly there emerged the clear and passionate certainty that the Church has to offer Europe the most precious of all gifts, a gift which no one else can give: faith in Jesus Christ, the source of the hope that does not disappoint; a gift which is at the origin of the spiritual and cultural unity of the European peoples and which both today and tomorrow can make an essential contribution to their development and integration. After twenty centuries, the Church stands at the beginning of the third millennium with a message which is ever the same, a message which constitutes her sole treasure: Jesus Christ is Lord; in him, and in no one else, do we find salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). Christ is the source of hope for Europe and for the whole world, “and the Church is the channel in which the grace pouring from the pierced Heart of the Savior flows and spreads.”

This confession of faith causes our hearts and lips to raise “a joyful *confession of hope*: ‘Risen and living Lord, you are the new hope of the Church and of humanity. You are the one true hope for the human family and for history. Already in this life, and in the life to come you are “among us the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). In you and with you, we find truth: our life has meaning, communion is possible, diversity can become richness, and the power of the kingdom is at work in history and helps to build the city of mankind. Love gives an eternal value to human efforts. Suffering becomes salvific, life will conquer death, creation will share in the glory of the children of God.’”

Faith must be translated into fidelity. It demands a profession, a logic of thought and of life, a lived consistency; it thus involves a witness, an effort, sacrifice, a “martyrdom,” as many Christian generations, many heroes of faith have taught us.

Faith obliges us to fidelity. First of all with regard to the religious truth that Christ entrusted to the apostles and that the Church, Mother and Teacher, transmits to us. It requires firm and authentic adherence to the truth revealed by the Lord and guaranteed by the ecclesiastical Magisterium, but this is an adherence that fills the mind with light and the will with strength. It helps us to think, it helps us to act. It is a fecund principle in two senses: first, in the capacity to know, to pray, to arrive at the spiritual experience of truth; second, in the capacity to act on the basis of faith, which traces out for us the way of life and fills us with the strength to walk upon this way.

MARCH 10, 1984

Fidelity presupposes faith, on which the foundations of Christian life are based. Faith is the horizon for your spiritual and apostolic path. Indeed, it is Jesus who guides believers throughout their life, supporting them in their apostolic dedication and bringing all their good resolutions to fulfillment.

OCTOBER 6, 1998

Today as well we must trust in the power that the word of God has to reawaken new life in the Church and to fill people with enthusiasm for following Christ! Faith becomes convincing if it is lived with fidelity and shared with others. Dare, therefore, to confront the issue of faith, exchange your experiences of faith, seek credible examples! They are living among you! Renew your lives in this way, drawing from the springs of Sacred Scripture, as it is believed and understood in fidelity to tradition; if you are able, read it every day and meditate upon it; give the word of God a convincing and winning role in your lives. Through his word, Christ himself becomes a living presence in you.

MAY 3, 1987

The salvation that Christ has won for us, the grace that he gives to us, *does not at all exempt us* from taking into consideration the miseries and the possibilities of our society, or the difficulties and energies of our ecclesial life, from seeking the most effective remedies for our ills with all the resources of our minds and hearts, from putting them into practice with courage and solidarity. *God does not eliminate our responsibility as human beings*: he elicits it, supports it, directs it, according to principles that guarantee authentic human progress in the long term. And this progress also has great importance for the Kingdom of God, as a plan for the transfigured world that God has prepared beyond time (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 39).

OCTOBER 10, 1988

How many people today, in the grip of their problems, become discouraged and turn in upon themselves? They speak of the silence of God as if God had abandoned them to suffering, to death, leaving them to their own strength, to their own human fragility. In reality, obsessed with their trials, like Job, they run the risk of no longer looking at this aspect of things. In effect, there is in the world a dark side, a mysterious consequence of evil after the first rupture with God; evil is found above all in hearts that do not have faith. But Christians are also called to look for God at work in the surprising possibilities of creation, in the dynamism that he has placed in the minds and hearts of human beings, jointly responsible for their own destiny; to discern the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus has sent.

OCTOBER 10, 1988

Only God can give us the necessary courage and the correct direction for our mission as Christians in today's world. This concept is also expressed in different words by the motto of this pastoral visit: "Yes to faith, yes to life." Only a decisive "yes" to faith will put you in the condition to say and to maintain just as decisive a "yes" to life in all of its forms and aspects. Our Christian vocation is a vocation to life, which emerges victorious over any culture of death.

So let us renew and deepen together our "yes" to faith, which is a "yes" to life, and is unleashed by our intimate communion with Christ.

JUNE 23, 1988

It is not enough for the believer to live the gift of faith individually. Faith, when it is authentic and vital, puts him or her in close relationship with other believers, together with whom he or she forms a community. The one who has the benefit of faith in God is necessarily called upon to bear witness to it in life, to share it with others, to help it to grow within hearts.

MARCH 26, 1988

The second characteristic of the true Christian is the *profession of faith*, and in this regard as well Mary is our model and our teacher. She, in fact, called by God for the unique and sublime mission of divine maternity, knows that she owes everything to God, accepts her singular mission, and remains faithful to the word given, from the moment of the Annunciation to the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus to the anticipation of Pentecost with the Apostles and disciples in the upper room, and then until the end of her existence. It must also be this way for the authentic Christian: “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8): the commandment that Jesus gives to the Apostles before ascending into heaven applies to everyone. “You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8). This is the task of the followers of Christ, which has endured for twenty centuries and will remain until the end of history: “Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father” (Mt 10:32). The “profession of faith,” both in individual and family life and in social and political life, has today become more difficult and more demanding because of what is called “secularization,” which has penetrated broadly into society and which, together with agnosticism and indifferentism, has led to the collapse of moral principles, human and Christian.

This is a reason to feel even more decisive and courageous in bearing witness to one’s Christian faith, which is not only a cause of eternal salvation, but also a source of peace on earth, of harmony and serenity.

MARCH 19, 1988

The eyes of faith behold a wonderful scene: that of a countless number of lay people, both women and men, busy at work in their daily life and activity, oftentimes far from view and quite unacclaimed by the world, unknown to the world's great personages but nonetheless looked upon in love by the Father, untiring laborers who work in the Lord's vineyard. Confident and steadfast through the power of God's grace, these are the humble yet great builders of the Kingdom of God in history.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI*, NO. 17

The mission of Christians also begins with Baptism. The *rediscovery of Baptism* through suitable *adult catechetical programs* is therefore an important aspect of the new evangelization. Renewing in a more mature way one's own acceptance of the faith is the condition for true and full participation in the Eucharistic Celebration, the summit of ecclesial life.

JANUARY 9, 2005

One of the Church's most urgent tasks today is the formation of the lay faithful. "The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfill one's mission" (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 58).

Therefore, this must be one of your priorities. In today's secularized world, which offers models of life devoid of spiritual values, it is a task which is ever more urgent. Faith dies when it is reduced to custom, to habit, to a purely emotional experience. It needs to be cultivated, helped to grow, at both the personal and the community level.

APRIL 4, 1998

Down the centuries, there has been a continual struggle for the correct profession of faith. Thanks be to Peter, whose words have become the norm!

They should be used to measure the Church's efforts in seeking to express in time what Christ means to her. In fact, it is not enough to profess with one's lips alone. Knowledge of Scripture and Tradition is important, the study of the *Catechism* is valuable; but what good is all this if faith lacks deeds?

Professing Christ calls for following Christ. The correct profession of faith must be accompanied by a correct conduct of life. *Orthodoxy requires orthopraxis.*

JUNE 21, 1998

By living in Christ through faith and the sacraments, the Christian also “freely commits his entire self” to God the Father (cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 5). The act of faith by which he makes a responsible decision for God, believes in his love revealed in the crucified and risen Christ, and abandons himself responsibly to the influence of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 4: 6-10) is the highest expression of freedom.

By joyfully fulfilling the Father’s will in every circumstance of life, after Christ’s example and in the power of Spirit, the Christian advances on the path of authentic freedom and looks with hope to the time when he will enter into the “full life” of the heavenly homeland.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1998

Based upon God's testimony and enjoying the supernatural assistance of *grace*, faith is of an order other than philosophical knowledge which depends upon sense perception and experience and which advances by the light of the intellect alone. Philosophy and the sciences function within the order of natural reason; while faith, enlightened and guided by the Spirit, recognizes in the message of salvation the "fullness of grace and truth" (cf. Jn 1:14) which God has willed to reveal in history and definitively through his Son, Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Jn 5:9; Jn 5:31-32).

The first proclamation of the Gospel was nothing other than the *testimony of this event*. “God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32). The Christian faith is so connected to this event that Paul does not hesitate to declare: “If Christ has not been raised, then empty [too] is our preaching; empty, too, your faith” (1 Cor 15:14). It is along the same lines that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* moves when it teaches: “The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross” (CCC, no. 638).

The Resurrection of Jesus is the power, the secret of Christianity. This is not a matter of mythology or mere symbolism, but of a concrete event. This is confirmed by sure and convincing proofs. The acceptance of this truth, while being the fruit of the grace of the Holy Spirit, at the same time rests upon a solid historical basis. On the threshold of the third millennium, the new impulse of evangelization cannot help but take its origin from a renewed experience of this mystery, accepted in faith and witnessed to in life.

APRIL 21, 1996

Christian maturity implies personal acceptance of the gift of grace, giving reason for our hope (cf. 1 Pt 3:15), celebration of the liturgy and of the other sacred acts, overcoming every rupture between faith and life, openness to charity and activity on behalf of justice, responsible dedication to the strengthening of one's own ecclesial community, apostolic ardor that leads to the communication of one's experience of faith through mission. In a few words, Christian maturity is situated within in the total realization of personal and community existence in the *following of Jesus*.

APRIL 30, 1996

The Gospel is an inspiring and illuminating force for the life of the People of God. Wherever the content of the Gospel is diminished, the consequences for human beings, individuals and society, are serious. It is only by basing themselves upon a solid foundation that Christians can take on their responsibilities in cultural, social, political, and economic life. One must avoid the spread of values that are capable of drawing multitudes but obscure the true nature of the Gospel. The truth of faith must be proclaimed with calm and reflection, “whether it is convenient or inconvenient” (2 Tm 4:2).

JUNE 22, 1996

Our task in the world does not presume that we Christians assimilate ourselves and become easy-going contemporaries, renouncing our identity. It instead requires that we remain Christians, that we defend and live our faith, offering it as an essential contribution to human society. In this task we must not allow ourselves to be obstructed by anyone, not even by the state.

JUNE 23, 1996

Christ says to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:13-14). In saying this, he is thinking of every person: every Christian is the salt of the earth and must strive to keep this salt from losing its savor; if he or she allows it to become insipid, it is no longer good for anything. Nonetheless, at the same time Christ is addressing the entire community: you, baptized Christians, as a community, can preserve the savor of the Gospel message, or you can lose it. *As a community*, keeping in your hearts the light that comes from God, *you can be the light that illuminates others*, like a city set upon a hill, or you can become the opposite of this light that illuminates others. Human beings can see the good that you do and give glory to the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt 5:16), or they can not see it, perhaps simply because the light remains hidden under a bushel basket, or because it is going out!

It is when the night enfolds us that we must think of the dawn to come; it is then that we must believe that the Church is reborn every morning on account of its saints. “Those who have once understood this,” Bernanos said, “have entered into the heart of the Catholic faith, they have felt vibrating in their mortal flesh... a superhuman hope.”

SEPTEMBER 22, 1996

It is not enough to profess ourselves as Catholics. It is necessary to give proof of that “working” faith of which the Acts of the Apostles speaks to us: a faith that finds its greatest expression in charity, in reciprocal welcome, in mutual respect, in fraternal and supportive love (cf. Acts 2:42-47).

These fruits of faith can ripen only if we commit ourselves to sincere personal conversion, capable of attracting and persuading others with the eloquence of example. *Verba volant, exempla trahunt.* Bearing witness to Christ in everyday life: this is the task of every believer, beginning with the family and continuing in the ecclesial movements and organizations of Christian inspiration. It is only in this way that the Gospel, the message of God made man, can constitute the effective leaven of the dough and guarantee and promote the growth of each and of all.

Catholics must not remain at the margins of social and political life. On the contrary, there is a great contribution they can and must give, taking their inspiration from the social doctrine of the Church, without ever ensconcing themselves in preconceived and biased positions that are often sterile when they are not outright damaging. How much more important than ever, in this area, is mutual respect, according to the ancient and golden principle: “*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas.*”

NOVEMBER 9, 1996

Handing on the Gospel message in today's world is particularly arduous, mainly because our contemporaries are immersed in cultural contexts that are often alien to an inner spiritual dimension, in situations in which a materialist outlook prevails. One cannot escape the fact that, more than in any other historical period, there is a breakdown in the process of handing on moral and religious values between generations. This leads to a kind of incongruity between the Church and the contemporary world.

Handing on the Christian message and its values, which help people to be coherent in the decisions they make and in the way they live, is a challenge that all ecclesial communities are called to take up, especially in the field of catechesis and in the formation of catechumens. In other ages—in St. Augustine's time, for example, or, more recently, throughout the twentieth century, when one could use the contributions of so many Christian philosophers—we learned to base what we said and the way we approached evangelization on sound anthropology and sound philosophy. In fact, it is only when philosophy opens up to Christ that the Gospel really will start to spread to all nations.

MARCH 16, 2002

All Christians are called to renew their profession of faith constantly, in word and in life, as a complete adherence to Christ, the Son of God made man, crucified for our salvation and risen through the power of God.

It is here that the nucleus of the proclamation and witness of the Christian faith is rooted. For this reason, *the first attitude of witnesses of faith is to profess this same faith that they preach*, docilely allowing themselves to be converted by the Spirit of God and conforming their lives to this divine wisdom.

NOVEMBER 4, 1982

One specific and indispensable form of the Christian proclamation is the witness that makes manifest before others the grace and joy that each one has found in Christ and that urges him or her to share it as an enriching experience of life. *The new evangelization therefore needs new witnesses*, meaning persons who have experienced the real transformation of their lives in their contact with Jesus Christ, and are capable of transmitting that experience to others. And it also needs new communities “in which the faith might radiate and fulfill the basic meaning of adherence to the person of Christ and his Gospel, of an encounter and sacramental communion with him, and of an existence lived in charity and in service” (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 34).

Only these Christians, animated by the ideal of holiness, will be capable of renewing humanity itself. It is the responsibility of the laity in a particular way to root in their faith the cultural creativity and the strength necessary to reform the institutions, customs, economic and social structures, thinking, and the entire fabric of society. It is up to them to evangelize what we have called the “privileged places of culture” (ibid., no. 44), from which the mentality and the values that will form the social conscience are guided and influenced. The world of thought and the centers of research and teaching; the means of social communication; economic, professional, and political organizations; family organizations: these are the great fields in which the new cultural synthesis must be incarnated, illuminated and animated by the faith.

This is the important challenge that presents itself to your Churches: to create a renewed society, more just and fraternal, that takes its inspiration from the commandment of love and places its hope in God, in order to succeed in being more deeply human. This is the social and historical objective of the new evangelization, which we call the “civilization of love and solidarity” (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, V and VI).

SEPTEMBER 23, 1991

It is necessary that the Gospel, *lived completely and proclaimed with courage*, be offered everywhere, to individuals and to communities. The new evangelization draws faithfully “from the inexhaustible treasure of the revelation completed once and for all in Jesus Christ” (Declaration of the Synod of Bishops for Europe), and reawakens in human beings, sometimes worn out by their everyday concerns, the desire to “go in search” of this inestimable gift. Those who find it, in fact, certainly go, sell all their possessions, and buy it (cf. Mt 13:45-46).

May it be in your care to educate the People of God to a *mature faith* that may make them ready and willing to construct a society to the measure of man, overcoming the temptations of individualism and factionalism.

JANUARY 4, 1992

The Christian response—which is the only one that can fully satisfy the human heart—is not a calculation, a collection of norms, a political ideology. It is instead the testimony of Christ, here and now in the same reality and originality as almost two thousand years ago. A Christ who wants to establish with human beings a personal relationship of covenant, of Truth and of Life, to whom he proposes that they follow him and experience his companionship, which gives meaning and unity to their lives, revealing to them their vocation, and, what is more important, teaching them the way that leads to the one true God.

JUNE 23, 1990

Through evangelization the Church is built up into a *community of faith*: more precisely, into a community that *confesses* the faith in full adherence to the word of God which is *celebrated* in the Sacraments, and *lived* in charity, the principle of Christian moral existence. In fact, the “good news” is directed to stirring a person to a conversion of heart and life and a clinging to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to disposing a person to receive Baptism and the Eucharist and to strengthen a person in the prospect and realization of new life according to the Spirit.

CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI, NO. 33

Evangelizing today is the arduous and marvelous task that lies before your dioceses! This must inspire the enthusiasm of all Christians, who have placed their hopes in Christ dead and risen, to ransom every man and every woman from the slavery of sin, from egoism and from every form of abuse of power, which results in the harm of the weakest, the defenseless, and those who have no voice!

This is a matter of understanding and living ever more deeply the great reality of *Christ the Savior*, Head of the Church and of humanity. We must live in a unified manner the moments of Christian salvation that are marked by catechesis, liturgical life, and Christian witness. Everyone must take ownership of the mission of the Church with the willingness to live generously the ministry or the *diakonia* that the Lord asks of each one of us.

APRIL 8, 1989

The mediation of the faith through the word, the sacraments, and the service of love permits us, above all, to appear as real and proper witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Being witnesses means committing all of one's existence to spreading the faith. Only those who have meditated upon the word of God in the depths of their hearts can transmit it in a credible way to others. From this follows the great necessity that priests and their pastoral assistants, whose position obliges them to transmit the faith, should receive an adequate preparation and a permanent formation such that the joyful message of Jesus Christ may reach human beings in a convincing way in our time as well.

The Church lives and spreads its faith in different ways: in communities and in parishes, in associations and groups— each according to its own concrete realities.

But the most important nucleus remains the family, lived and organized according to Christian principles, which Vatican Council II defines as “what might be regarded as the domestic church, [in which] the parents, by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 11).

Transmitting the faith requires above all a trustful conversation between the generations, in such a way as to arrive at an exchange of religious experiences and mutual enrichment. Once again it is the family that is the natural place to exercise this conversation in the faith. For this reason, I would like once again to encourage you to pay special attention to the pastoral care of families and young people.

JUNE 1, 1989

As the Apostle says, *faith comes through hearing* (cf. Rom 10:14). We must therefore make a priority in our pastoral plans and in our action the living proclamation and trust in the word of God through preaching, in catechesis, in the family, in the teaching of religion, and in work with young people.

The service of the Word deserves precedence with respect to anything else, even with respect to something very important and necessary. What people need and what—perhaps unconsciously—they are expecting is the message of liberation of the Kingdom of God that is already in our midst, that heals and transforms the world. From this comes the proper spiritual and moral direction in life.

Through this new evangelization that is being asked for today, one comes to an intact Catholic faith and to the morality of the Church to which one has bound oneself. But above all, a new evangelization unleashes the reality of transmitting, preaching, and spreading the foundations of the faith as they are. Every believer receives the vision and value of life and of the world in its totality and in its full significance only from Jesus Christ.

JUNE 1, 1989

The time for wisdom on the part of everyone is now! *The time for a renewed witness of faith on the part of Christians is now!* We are being challenged to bring to humanity the Gospel of Christ, the Good News of redemption and of adoption as God's children. We are being challenged to bear witness to the wisdom of the Incarnate Word, Christ the "Light of the Nations" (cf. Lk 2:32), a light that leads to fullness of life for those who accept it. In the face of such great challenges, the Spirit of truth is urging us to persevere in the ecumenical task.

JUNE 2, 1989

The future will belong to believers only if they do not keep the faith only for themselves. Our faith is nourished by the witness of the community and with the Church. We must test our faith beyond the narrow boundaries of our everyday lives, and spread it to all the world.

We are all concerned about the future of the Christian faith in Europe. I myself never tire of urging the reevangelization of this continent. With the motto, "The future belongs to believers," you as well have united yourselves with this appeal. With it you express your trust for the future of our faith in Europe.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1989

The faith lived by Christians and celebrated in the liturgy of the Word and in the sacraments is truly the objective of the Church all over the world.

The Christian faith intends to insert its witness into this materialistic world. It must come to grips with resistance and rejection. In this sense, it will always find itself in opposition and struggle with hostile and malicious powers. A Christian witness in the world cannot be given without courage and strength. Its certainty about the truth must be demonstrated in a clear and evident way, in word, behavior, and life.

JANUARY 28, 1988

It is in *the profession of religious belief*, however, that we must go beyond the message offered by other persons of good will who do not share our faith, for we must *publicly communicate the good news of Jesus Christ*, our Savior and Lord.

Every Catholic in the *communications media will be fearless in the presentation and defense of truth*—even when that truth may be unpopular at a particular time or in a particular place.

MARCH 3, 1988

Begin anew to speak of the faith, to transmit the faith in the dialogue between the generations, spouses, coworkers, friends. If the disciples of Christ become mute, the stones will speak: the stones of abandoned and ruined churches. You do well to maintain your beautiful ancient churches. But it is even more important to fill these churches with life Sunday after Sunday. Even more important is *being church ourselves*: a building of living stones. This is why the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 made this exhortation: “All the laity must carry out their role in the Church and in their everyday occupations, in such a way as to permeate and transform the world with the light and the life of Christ.”

JUNE 25, 1988

Allow me to insist on the need for a clear and explicit proclamation of the faith.

The message to be proclaimed concerns the whole personal and social life of the human person. It seeks a renewal of humanity, of cultures. It aims at a profound and broad liberation based on fundamental liberation from sin. It calls to conversion. It is rooted in the witness given to the Father, in the salvation in Jesus Christ, in the work of the Holy Spirit, who are part of the order of the revelation of that which has not appeared naturally to the eyes of human beings left to their own intelligence, to their own strength.

This message is transmitted through witness. *The witness of life is always necessary.*

APRIL 24, 1987

The truth of human beings and about human beings needs to be proclaimed in the completeness of their finite being and infinite destiny. This is the special aim of those who travel the roads of culture, “seekers of truth” as the Council called them in the message to intellectuals and scientists, “the explorers of man, of the universe and of history, to all of you who are pilgrims enroute to the light.”

Humanity finds itself today—on the threshold of the third millennium—in the anguish of unprecedented change, which cannot move in the direction of salvation except by virtue of a new culture of planetary dimensions. The decisive vital force in order that the handoff from one culture to the other should take place along the lines of growing universality is the faith, which, never identifying itself with a given culture, offers human beings the point of support in order to raise themselves beyond the horizon of that which is fading away.

And the revealed truth, the object of the faith, flows from the first and creator Being, who is God. And the Son of God, incarnate for the salvation of humanity, has presented himself as the truth itself: “*Ego sum via, veritas et vita* (Jn 14:6). *The way*, outside of which we lose our direction in the labyrinth of contradictions and questions without answers; *the truth* that sets us free (cf. Jn 8:32); *the life*, which assures human beings the dimension of eternity and already places them within it by the gift of grace.

OCTOBER 18, 1986

Not only should there be no split between the Christian faith and the world of work, but these are complementary realities, which already in the Divine Laborer of Nazareth have found their perfect symbiosis and always place him before the eyes of all as the ideal point of reference.

In order to offer such a witness, an effective Christian presence is necessary within the labor movement, so as to carry out a function of leavening and encouragement, among other things helping people of work to be ever more aware of their own identity, asking themselves the fundamental questions about the meaning of work, about the work-family relationship, about the dignity of work and of the human person created in the image of God. To this end, pastoral care in this sector still has room to offer to the world of work, and to workers in particular, new content for a reconstruction of their identity and a method for a praxis in which such an identity may be expressed according to its Christian originality and with a real capacity of sharing and of response to deep concrete needs.

JANUARY 23, 1982

Our duty as priests is that of *bearing witness to the faith*, exercising the “*munus regale*.” As the Second Vatican Council emphasized, the royal mission of Jesus Christ is transmitted in a particular way to the Church under the form of pastoral power, which the bishops exercise in communion with the Successor of Peter and the priests and deacons under the direction of the bishops (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 18f.). This pastoral power has its source, its continuing justification, its example and ideal in Christ, the Good Shepherd, who gives his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:15), and, when he finds the one that is lost, takes it with joy upon his shoulders (cf. Lk 15:5).

Bearing witness to the faith as priests therefore means sanctifying ourselves and serving Christ and others with that *pastoral charity* which, lived in communion, makes us perfect in unity (cf. Jn 17:23) and proclaimers of the Son of God, the Savior, “so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21).

Bearing witness to the faith as priests means giving ourselves generously to the “*mysterium verbi*,” seeking every means most suitable so that the Gospel may truly be proclaimed “to every creature” (Mk 16:15), seeing to it that catechesis be appropriate and carried out in an organic, comprehensive, and profound way for all categories of persons, especially the young, who sometimes are left to fend for themselves.

Bearing witness to the faith as priests means being channels of grace to communicate life through the worthy celebration of the divine mysteries, the administration of the sacraments, and of the sacrament of Reconciliation in particular, in order to lead the faithful to love of the good, the ultimate source of true judgments of moral conscience.

Bearing witness to the faith as priests means placing ourselves completely at the disposal of God, so that “he may make of us a perennial sacrifice pleasing to him” (cf. Eucharistic Prayer III): this is what we say to the Lord, to our Creator and Father, in the name and in the person of Christ, and at the same time in the name of all creatures, in such a way as to be always truly *men-for*: for God and for our brothers and sisters, without limitations, in the total joy of self-donation.

Bearing witness to the faith as priests means, finally, being *men of prayer*, in that we are participants, in a special way, in the prayer of Jesus: men of God, consecrated, at the highest moment of each day we lend our mouths to Christ himself, who praises the Father and intercedes continually for us (cf. Heb 7:25).

AUGUST 12, 1984

The Church must evangelize itself in order to respond to the challenges of the people of today.

If atheism is a temptation of faith, it will be by the deepening and purification of faith that this will be overcome.

If secularism calls into question the conception of the human person in the world and the utilization of the universe, evangelization must again propose that cosmic theology and spirituality which, founded biblically and present in the liturgy, has received illuminating perspectives from the Second Vatican Council (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 37).

If the Industrial Revolution, born in Europe, has given rise to a kind of economy, to social relationships, and to movements that seem to oppose the Church and obstruct evangelization, it will be by living, proclaiming, and embodying the Gospel of justice, of fraternity, and of work that we will restore to the world of work a human and Christian world.

OCTOBER 5, 1982

Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. *Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!* It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support.

Peoples everywhere, open the doors to Christ! His Gospel in no way detracts from man's freedom, from the respect that is owed to every culture and to whatever is good in each religion. By accepting Christ, you open yourselves to the definitive word of God, to the One in whom God has made himself fully known and has shown us the path to himself.

The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious.

REDEMPTORIS MISSIO, NOS. 2, 3

The Victory That Overcomes the World

We rise up from every situation, even from the most tragic, when we have faith in our hearts and trust in our own capacities, placed at the service of the common good.

APRIL 27, 1991



Behold, the “victory that overcomes the world.”

Christianity is not a “museum collection.” It cannot be considered as a tradition *tolerable to the extent to which* it does not prevent us from “getting along in this world.” It is not that. It is not that at all!

It is instead a great reality: *it is the reality of Jesus Christ* for every person. It is the reality that touches always and constantly upon the problem of the human person. It touches precisely upon the point that many instead try to escape. Systems of thought and ideologies avoid it in a systematic way, claiming at the same time that they represent progress.

And Jesus Christ, incessantly—through his Death and Resurrection—*places* before the human person and humanity the problem of the “victory that overcomes the world.” And the human person must choose: either to exist in this world *as one* who will be a definitive *victor*, or as one who will be definitively *overcome* by the world.

APRIL 18, 1982

To all, the Lord says: “And the victory that conquers the world is our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). The new evangelization that the world awaits consists precisely in representing with authenticity the living source of the Divine Word. Presenting the word of faith deepened in meditation and study, assimilated in prayer, embodied in a holy life, which takes its inspiration from the model of Christ. May your witness be a seed, a *seed of truth* for every person you encounter. May you have the firm conviction that you are not alone in presenting the Christian faith. When you speak, and the power of the Spirit speaks through you, especially if it is with your life, you will succeed in making it understood that in you the faith has sought a new person, according to God, in justice and in true holiness (cf. Eph 2:24).

SEPTEMBER 23, 1990

The victory that overcomes the world is always—and only—our faith (cf. 1 Jn 5:4). That which nourishes faith must, therefore, remain always at the center of every pastoral initiative.

Only a faith that may become the substance of life can act effectively upon the people of today, tired of deceptive and empty words. They are waiting for a message that may open up before them an authentic perspective of hope. In the exclusion of God, in fact, is hidden the poison of an excruciating solitude, of a dangerous “lack of meaning,” which causes disorientation and obfuscates the possible and wise responses to the problems of life. Experience teaches that for a serene life, pleasure is not enough. Human beings need truth, without which the joy of earthly things shows itself to be a will o’ the wisp, incapable of giving off light and heat.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1990

In the face of the trials that insistently press upon the conscience of the Christian today, we must have an intrepid and courageous faith, illuminated by the word of God and upheld by his grace in adherence with the preaching of the Church: a faith that may be a joyful experience of Christ, Redeemer of man.

Faith—we must remember this—is not weakness or alienation, as some ideologies would like to inculcate. Believing means reaching the highest truth and asserting one's freedom, with a commitment that does not hide from serious moral perspectives. Believing means trusting in God and walking in his light. Faith is a power that commits the Christian, even more than others, to the effort to build a more just, more peaceful, more human society. So faith is not weakness, but power of the spirit.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1987

May you also be courageous in living and bearing witness to your Christian faith, convinced that this is truly the solution to the most serious problems of life! May you also be generous, always, toward everyone, with love, with charity, with the spirit of sacrifice, sure that the true joy is found in loving and giving!

NOVEMBER 11, 1981

I want to urge you to reaffirm your faith with courage and with commitment; to guard it within your hearts; to profess it, without fear and without weakness, publicly with words, with example, always in radical consistency with the demands, sometimes difficult, of the Christian conscience. “The believer,” St. Augustine cautions us, “should not simply believe with his heart, while out of fear he prevents his lips from proclaiming that which he believes. There are Christians who have faith in their hearts... but are afraid to profess it with their lips, almost as if they prohibited their lips from sounding out that which they know, that which they have within themselves.... Let the lips speak, therefore, that which the heart has within: this against simulation.... May your lips be always in harmony with your heart” (cf. *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 39, 16: PL 36, 444). For Christians, consistency is the most beautiful manifestation of the authenticity of their faith!

NOVEMBER 8, 1980

You who are laypersons in the Church, and who possess faith, the greatest of all resources—you have a unique opportunity and crucial responsibility. Through your lives in the midst of your daily activities in the world, you show *the power that faith has to transform the world* and to renew the family of man. Even though it is hidden and unnoticed like the leaven or the salt of the earth spoken of in the Gospel, your role as laity is indispensable for the Church in the fulfillment of her mission from Christ. This was clearly taught by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council when they stated: “The Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is she a perfect sign of Christ among people, unless there exists a laity worthy of the name, working alongside the hierarchy. For the Gospel cannot be deeply imprinted on the mentality, life, and work of any people without the active presence of lay people” (*Ad Gentes*, no. 21).

MAY 8, 1980

“But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8). In reality, *this question about faith is, at the same time, a question about prayer.* Christ, in fact, asks whether at the moment of his second coming he will find the prayer that is unleashed by faith. It is a question that contains within itself an exhortation for every believer to make prayer *an important test of his or her faith.* The whole Church is called to pray, because in prayer are manifested the desire and anticipation of the return of Christ, of the definitive return of Christ. At the same time, prayer brings to light the hope of victory of the Christian people in the various combats that accompany the pilgrimage of human beings upon the earth.

OCTOBER 22, 1995

Today as well, not a few Christians are reliving the same experience as the beloved disciple. May they courageously resist the trial, repeating to themselves the same words as he did. The victory of faith is played out *in the depths of each person*, with the opportunity given in Christ to make even the cross the way toward resurrection and life. It is played out *in human history* with the progressive transformation of ideas, of customs, of structures, through a process of inculturation of Gospel principles in the social environment, the fruit of the efforts of all.

Young people, twenty centuries of Christianity have not gone by in vain: if you review the history of so many modern accomplishments of civilization, you will discover that at their origin are Christian inspirations. My first response is, therefore, this: may you have *the courage to believe in Christ*. If he is with you, you will be able to confront even the great problems of the present moment, and resolve them.

MAY 14, 1985

Is not the faith of each one of us exposed to our own weakness? And also to incredulity, distrust, doubts, the pressure of opinion, and at times, to intimidation, discrimination, and persecution?

Let us think today of *all people all over the world*, of all of those to whom Christ has granted his light: to how many difficulties, oppressions, persecutions, is exposed the faith of many of them! And how often must faith struggle with the weaknesses of each one of us!

Let us pray for a strong faith. Let us pray for the courage of faith.

APRIL 1, 1984

We walk to God through faith. This is an even more unusual way of the human spirit, which demands greater courage, than “walking on the water.” Faith is a question of courage, *of supernatural courage*. This is seen in the face of the “violent wind,” in the face of trials, in the face of temptations. When in such situations we lack the courage of faith, we begin to sink like Peter, who was frightened by the violence of the wind upon the lake. And then resounds the voice of Christ: “Man of little faith, why did you doubt...?”

You men of difficult work upon the sea, men of daily courage, *be also men of courageous faith!* Do not allow any temptation to knock this faith out of your hands. Do not allow it to be torn away by the *different currents* that permeate the contemporary mentality. Do not allow any form of materialism to destroy it.

And when temptation shakes your faith, shout like Peter, “Lord, save me!”

May you be able to fight for your faith, for the faith of your families, of your children, of your neighbors.

Christ comes *to the aid of our weakness*.

In the contemporary liturgy we pray: “Almighty and eternal God, who gives us the privilege of calling you Father, increase in us the spirit of adoptive children, so that we may enter into the inheritance that you have promised us.”

This is the inheritance of God, transmitted to us in Jesus Christ,

- *Transmitted by the Apostles* who were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, and became “fishers of men” (Mk 1:17)
- *Transmitted in the Church* from generation to generation: *the inheritance of the faith*

In this inheritance is contained in the eternal vocation of human beings.

In this inheritance is their definitive future!

Let us persevere in this inheritance: “Lord... command me to come to you on the water.”

AUGUST 12, 1984

Let us pray that our generation may have a faith that is deliberate and full of maturity, a *faith equal to any trial!* May this faith be a participation in the faith of Mary, who stands upright at the foot of the *Cross* of her Son *on Calvary*. Was not Mary's great trial that of seeing her Son rejected and condemned to death by the leaders of her people? She followed him until the end. She shared everything. She united herself with Jesus who offered his life for the salvation of the world.... And we, when God seems far away, when we do not understand his ways, when the cross wears out our shoulders and our hearts, when we suffer on account of our faith, let us learn from our Mother the firmness of faith in trial, and how to draw strength and courage from our unconditional attachment to Jesus Christ.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1984

Be not afraid! Have faith! I say this to you together with the Divine Teacher, Jesus! In spite of the criticisms of the Church and the aversion to its doctrine; in spite of the conflicts and opposition that have continued in every age and at every juncture of history, the Truth remains forever, the only light on human destiny and the only salvation! Modern society, which is dramatically passing through so many threats and so much distress, feels an acute need for supernatural certainties and looks anxiously to the Catholic Church and to you, priests and people, who are its visible and daily presence: remain firm, therefore, in the faith.

We are living in difficult times, and it is necessary that all Christians know ever more clearly and profoundly the content of their faith, and also the historical experiences of the Church, in order to be able to live consciously and fervently that which they believe and thus to be “light” in the world, according to the command of Christ. Attend, therefore, to catechetical teaching, religious culture, the catechesis of young people and of adults, the Liturgy of the Word, periodicals and the educational press, parish libraries. And, naturally, may the newness of life become a commitment and a constant attention of fraternal love, of charity lived toward all, and particularly toward those who find themselves in some physical or psychological necessity.

OCTOBER 15, 1983

A Strong Faith

The word of faith really is a power that enlightens consciences, frees them from all servitude, and renders them capable of good.

OCTOBER 4, 2001



Adherence to the Christian mystery cannot remain a vague attachment: it presupposes *a faith that is strong*, firm, illuminated. Faith will find it difficult to stand up to contemporary problems, to the many changes, if it is not nourished by regular and complete catechesis among the young, by permanent education among the adult laity, by constant reinforcement among priests. Daily prayer, Sunday religious practice, regular participation in the sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist, are the normal expression of the adherence of faith to Christ the Savior, and I gladly encourage your liturgical and sacramental pastoral efforts.

OCTOBER 10, 1988

May you always have the courage and the dignity of your faith. Strengthen it. Ceaselessly draw near to Christ, the cornerstone, as living stones, sure of attaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. The Lord Jesus has already made you members of his body; Son of God, he makes you participate in his divine nature, making you participate in his Spirit. Draw with joy from the gushing spring of the Eucharist. May he fill you with his charity!

NOVEMBER 29, 1979

“Be firm in your faith” (1 Pt 5:9). Be so in the first place by means of thorough and gradual knowledge of the content of Christian doctrine. It is not enough to be Christians because of the Baptism received or because of the historico-social conditions in which you are born and live. As you grow in years and culture, new problems and new requirements of clarity and certainty come into consciousness. It is then necessary to set out in a responsible way in search of the motivations of your own Christian faith. If you do not become personally aware and do not have an adequate understanding of what must be believed and of the reasons for this faith, at a certain moment everything may inevitably collapse and be swept away, in spite of the good will of parents and educators.

Therefore, today is specially the time for study, meditation, and reflection. I say to you therefore: use your intelligence well, make an effort to reach correct and personal convictions, do not waste time, deepen the motives and foundations of faith in Christ and in the Church, so as to be firm now and in your future.

One is firm in the faith, furthermore, by means of prayer.

St. Paul already recommended: “Pray constantly” (1 Thes 5:17). It is possible, in fact, to know Holy Scripture perfectly, it is possible to be learned in philosophy and in theology, yet not have faith, or fail in faith; because it is always God who calls first to know him and love him in the right way. It is necessary, therefore, to be humble before the Almighty.

It is necessary to maintain the sense of mystery, because there always remains the infinite between God and man. It is necessary to remember that before God and his Revelation it is not so much a question of understanding with one’s own limited reason, but rather of loving.

For this reason Jesus said, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will” (Mt 11:25-26).

MARCH 24, 1979

Be strong in your faith—faith in Christ, and in his Church, faith in all that the Father has revealed and accomplished through his Son and in the Holy Spirit.

Today I call upon you to live by faith even more profoundly. For it is faith in God which makes the essential difference in your lives and in the life of every priest.

Be faithful to your daily prayers; they will keep your faith alive and vibrant.

Study the faith diligently so that your knowledge and love of Christ will continually increase.

And nourish your faith each day at Mass, for in the Eucharist we have the source and greatest expression of our faith.

OCTOBER 5, 1979

A clear and consistent faith, ready to turn itself into action beyond any equivocation and reticence: this is what is so urgent, especially among the ideological threats and the overturning of values, while the seductions of secularization insinuate themselves into the various areas of life and try to compartmentalize the Christian conscience, drawing it away from its responsibilities.

A robust faith is a guarantee of support for morality, which is expressed in the observance of the commandments of God authoritatively presented by the teaching Church, and becomes the guardian of the sacredness of human life from the moment of its emergence in the maternal womb.

An active faith makes a special contribution to the good of society, it encourages the elevation of civilization, it is a participation in the anxieties, distress, the problems common to all. It is a source of hope in the weariness, disappointment, fears that, in different dimensions, worry the human person, protagonist and victim of the technological revolution in this portion of the twentieth century.

The contemporary world needs profound Christian inspiration. It needs, as John Paul I proclaimed, “that addition of soul which is called for from so many sides and which alone can guarantee salvation” (*Insegnamenti*, 14). The Christian vocation must apply itself to this with transparency and generosity, concretely harmonizing truth and love.

JUNE 15, 1985

Be People of Faith

The journey of faith is part of everything that happens in our lives.

AUGUST 15, 2000



If you do not want to give in to temptations,
if you do not want to allow yourselves to be led by them
down the wrong paths,
be people of prayer!
Have trust in God,
and manifest it in prayer.
Be people of deep and living faith!
Above all now,
renew your faith
in Jesus Christ crucified and risen.
Meditate on the teaching of faith!
Meditate on its divine truths!
And above all,
permeate with faith your hearts
and your lives
(with the heart, in fact, one believes
in order to obtain justice).
Profess this faith
with your minds and with your hearts,
with your words and with your works
(the profession of faith
leads to salvation).

FEBRUARY 20, 1983

Arise!

How many times and on how many occasions
do people need

to have this appeal repeated to them.

Arise, you who are disappointed;

arise, you who have no more hope;

arise, you who have become accustomed to the dreariness,
and no longer believe

that anything new can happen.

Arise, because God is about to make
“all things new.”

Arise, you who have gotten used
to the gifts of God;

arise, you who have forgotten
the capacity for amazement;

arise, you who have lost the confidence
to call God “papa”;

arise, and be again
full of admiration for the goodness of God.

Arise, you who suffer;

arise, you to whom life
seems to have denied so much;

arise when you feel excluded,
abandoned, marginalized.

Arise, because Christ
has shown you his love
and has in store for you
an unexpected possibility
of fulfillment and solidarity!

Arise!

To believe in Jesus today, to follow Jesus as Peter, Thomas, and the first Apostles and witnesses did, demands of us, just as it did in the past, that we take a stand for him, almost to the point at times of a new martyrdom: the martyrdom of those who, today as yesterday, are called to go against the tide in order to follow the divine Master, to follow “the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4).

Perhaps you will not have to shed your blood, but you will certainly be asked to be faithful to Christ! A faithfulness to be lived in the circumstances of everyday life: I am thinking of how difficult it is in today’s world for engaged couples to be faithful to purity before marriage. I think of how the mutual fidelity of young married couples is put to the test. I think of friendships and how easily the temptation to be disloyal creeps in.

I think also of how those who have chosen the path of special consecration have to struggle to persevere in their dedication to God and to their brothers and sisters. I think of those who want to live a life of solidarity and love in a world where the only things that seem to matter are the logic of profit and one’s personal or group interest.

I think too of those who work for peace and who see new outbreaks of war erupt and grow worse in different parts of the world; I think of those who work for human freedom and see people still slaves of themselves and of one another. I think of those who work to ensure love and respect for human life and who see life so often attacked and the respect due to life so often flouted.

Dear young people, in such a world, is it hard to believe? Is it hard to believe in the Third Millennium? Yes! It is hard. There is no need to hide it. It is hard, but with the help of grace it can be done.

It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making

the world more human and more fraternal.

AUGUST 19, 2000

Men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable—a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves. Christian faith comes to meet them, offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal which they seek. Moving beyond the stage of simple believing, Christian faith immerses human beings in the order of grace, which enables them to share in the mystery of Christ, which in turn offers them a true and coherent knowledge of the Triune God. In Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, faith recognizes the ultimate appeal to humanity, an appeal made in order that what we experience as desire and nostalgia may come to its fulfillment.

FIDES ET RATIO, NO. 33

The journey of believers toward the Third Millennium is in no way weighed down by the weariness which the burden of two thousand years of history could bring with it. Rather, Christians feel invigorated, in the knowledge that they bring to the world the true light, Christ the Lord. Proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth, true God and perfect Man, the Church opens to all people the prospect of being “divinized” and thus of becoming more human. This is the one path which can lead the world to discover its lofty calling and to achieve it fully in the salvation wrought by God.

INCARNATIONIS MYSTERIUM, NO. 2

May your faith, a precious treasure handed down to you by your parents, be manifested and professed consistently, in such a way that it may become a “sign” of hope and also of certitude for those who may find themselves in doubt or spiritual uncertainty.

This faith must find its concrete expression in *sacramental life*: the Church lives by the sacraments; Christians live by the sacraments, in particular of Penance and the Eucharist. We have constant need for the forgiveness of God the Father; we have constant need, for our long and dangerous human journey, of the food that Christ gives to us in the Eucharist.

APRIL 2, 1984

We have such need of faith!

Faith is so necessary to the person of our times, of the difficult modern era!

It is so necessary to have *great faith!*

Right at this moment, great faith is necessary for persons, families, communities, the Church.

And it is precisely in order to prepare ourselves for a mature perspective of faith on the problems of the Church and of the contemporary world that Divine Providence has given us the Second Vatican Council, its teaching and direction.

It is necessary that now, in the individual communities that are also the churches—at least in the “domestic churches”—*the work* of assimilating this teaching should continue.

We must read, we must listen, and accept in the silence of interior readiness that word which the Holy Spirit “speaks to the Church” of our time.

MARCH 19, 1982

The faith which brings salvation *must be seen in every aspect of our lives*, in the way we think, in the way we act, in the way we treat others.

Jesus puts this question to each of his followers: “Do you believe...?” (Jn 9:35). Echoing the Lord’s words, I appeal to you: “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ!” Be confident that your faith in the Good News has the power to transform your lives and to purify and ennoble the life of your society.

AUGUST 10, 1993

This is the time of action! Uncertainty, disorientation, hesitation, passive waiting must return no more. The Christian vocation does not allow any breaks for napping, much less for sleep. In the vineyard of the Lord, we must work with diligence, zeal, and tenacity. We must spread the ferment of the Good News of the Gospel in the social environment. And Catholic action must make its own contribution with consistency, ardor, generosity.

JANUARY 13, 1985

It is urgent then that Christians should rediscover *the newness of the faith and its power to judge* a prevalent and all-intrusive culture.

It is urgent to rediscover and to set forth once more the authentic reality of the Christian faith, which is not simply a set of propositions to be accepted with intellectual assent. Rather, faith is a lived knowledge of Christ, a living remembrance of his commandments, and a *truth to be lived out*. A word, in any event, is not truly received until it passes into action, until it is put into practice. Faith is a decision involving one's whole existence. It is an encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and of life between the believer and Jesus Christ, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6). It entails an act of trusting abandonment to Christ, which enables us to live as he lived (cf. Gal 2:20), in profound love of God and of our brothers and sisters.

Faith also possesses a moral content. It gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment; it entails and brings to perfection the acceptance and observance of God's commandments.

Through the moral life, faith becomes "confession," not only before God but also before men: it becomes *witness*.

What we need in these arduous and providential times are new saints, generous new apostles who, coming forth from the upper room, allow themselves to be led by the Spirit and listen to the words of the divine Teacher: “Go into the whole world!” This is the assignment: into the whole world! to all creatures! into every environment, even to the ends of the earth!

The world needs men and women who are able to gather up the spiritual inheritance of those who have preceded them, becoming the courageous witnesses of a God who does not cease to fill with his infinite love the heart of the human person. Yes, the eagerly anticipated new evangelization needs modern saints to prolong the marvelous blossoming of persons whom Providence has forged into masterpieces of supernatural beauty. We must go out with a missionary spirit to meet people where they are, and proclaim to them the Gospel of hope and of joy. It is necessary to open the doors of ecclesial communication to all with a spirit of fraternal welcoming and open generosity. The truth about the human person and about God must be proclaimed and transmitted through a catechesis that is not only an exposition of principles but an impassioned and consistent communication of an experience of faith.

MARCH 11, 1991

We need to set out anew from Christ and, in so doing, to set out anew from the Trinity. We need to “set out anew from Christ,” with the zeal of Pentecost, with renewed enthusiasm. To set out from him above all in a daily commitment to holiness, with an attitude of prayer and of listening to his word. To set out from him in order to testify to his Love by living a Christian life marked by communion, charity, and witness before the world. This is the program which I suggest in the present Apostolic Letter. It can all be reduced to one word: “Jesus Christ!”

We must set out anew from Christ, if we are to advance confidently into the new millennium as witnesses to the love of God, who became one of us and was born among us.

JANUARY 7, 2001

Set out anew from Christ, you who have found mercy.

Set out anew from Christ, you who have forgiven and been forgiven.

Set out anew from Christ, you who have known pain and suffering.

Set out anew from Christ, you who are tempted by tepidity: the year of grace is endless.

Set out anew from Christ, Church of the new millennium.

Sing as you go!

JUNE 3, 2001

English translation copyright © 2012, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Excerpts from *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor, copyright © 1966 by America Press, Inc. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture excerpts used in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, rev. ed. © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Excerpts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition, copyright © 2000, Libreria Editrice Vaticana-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Cover photo, © Gianni Giansanti/Sygma/Corbis
Digital edition, January 2013



QED stands for Quality, Excellence and Design. The QED seal of approval shown here verifies that this eBook has passed a rigorous quality assurance process and will render well in most eBook reading platforms.

For more information please [click here](#).