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Benedict XVI's Greeting to the UNIV Participants

Each year during Holy Week in Rome, an international congress for students is organized with the help of the Prelature of Opus Dei. Pope Benedict met with participants on April 10.

19/04/2006

Dear Friends,

I extend a warm greeting to all of you who have come to Rome, continuing

a tradition that is already a few years old, to be here for Holy Week and to participate in the UNIV international congress. You belong, as can be seen, to many different countries, and you take advantage of the means of Christian formation that the Prelature of Opus Dei offers in your cities. I welcome you and thank you for your visit. I greet in particular your Prelate, Msgr. Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, and also your young representative. I want to thank them for the sentiments they have expressed on everyone's behalf.

Your presence in Rome, the heart of Christianity, during Holy Week offers you a way to live the Paschal mystery intensely. Specifically, it allows you to find Christ more intimately, especially through the contemplation of His passion, death, and resurrection. He is the one who, as I wrote in the Message for the 21st World Youth Day, guides your steps,

your university studies and your friendships in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. For some of you, just as it happened to the Apostles, the personal encounter with the divine Master who calls you friends (see Jn 15, 15) can be the beginning of an extraordinary adventure: the adventure of becoming apostles among your fellow men and women so they can share in your experience of friendship with the God made man, with a God who has made Himself my friend. Do not ever forget, dear young people, that in the end your happiness and mine depend on the encounter and friendship with Jesus.

I find the subject of the congress, namely, the culture and the means of social communication, very interesting. Unfortunately, we have to admit that today the new technologies and the mass media do not always promote personal

relations, or a sincere dialogue, or friendship among people. They do not help people to grow in intimacy with God either. For you, I know this well, friendship and relations with others, especially with your friends, are an important part of your everyday lives. It is key for you to keep Christ as one of your most beloved friends; even more, your dearest friend. You will see, then, how your friendship with Him will lead you to open yourselves up to the others. You will see them as brothers and sisters and develop a bond of sincere friendship with each one. In fact, Jesus Christ is the very incarnate love of God (see *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 12). Only in Christ can we find the strength to offer human affection and supernatural charity to our brothers and sisters, in a spirit of service that is shown above all in understanding. It is a wonderful thing to feel understood and to begin to understand others.

Dear young people, allow me to repeat to you what I said to your friends gathered in Cologne last August: whoever has found Christ cannot help but bring others to Him, as the joy is too great to keep it to oneself, the joy must be shared. And this is precisely the task for which Christ calls you. This is “the apostolate of friendship” that St. Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei, describes as “personal friendship,” self-sacrificing, and sincere: face to face, heart to heart. (Furrow, n. 191). Every Christian is invited to be a friend of God and, with His grace, to bring one’s friends to Him. Apostolic love becomes, then, an authentic passion that is expressed in communicating to others the joy that one has found in Jesus Christ. It is St. Josemaría, once again, who reminds you of some key words regarding your spiritual path: “Communion, union, conversation, confidence: word, bread, love.” (The Way, n. 535)

These are the great words that express the essential points of our path. If you develop a friendship with Christ, if you make frequent use of the Sacraments, especially the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, you will be ready to become the “new generation of apostles anchored firmly in the word of Christ, capable of responding to the challenges of our times and prepared to spread the Gospel far and wide.” (Message for the 21st World Youth Day)

May the Blessed Virgin help you to say always “yes” to the Lord who calls you to follow Him, and may St. Josemaría intercede for you. Wishing you a good Holy Week spend in prayer and reflection here in Rome, where there are so many remnants of Christian faith; with all my affection I bless you, I bless those who care for your formation and all who are dear to you.

Pope Benedict XVI

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