

The Dynamic Role of the Intellectual in the Message of Blessed Josemaría

Ethel Tolansky

Westminster University London, United Kingdom

“To meet the challenge of creating a new, authentic and integral humanism, the University needs people attentive to the word of the only Teacher; it needs qualified professionals and credible witnesses to Christ. This mission is certainly not easy. It requires constant commitment, it is nourished by prayer and study, and it is expressed in the normal events of everyday life”¹.

These words of the Holy Father sum up the challenge to the intellectual at the beginning of the new millennium within a constantly changing world landscape of shattering political events and splintering allegiances. They throw down the gauntlet to anyone who plays a part in shaping the minds, spirits, characters and souls of those with whom they come into contact, either personally or through the powerful means of the media. Throughout his pastoral life, through his preaching and in his writings, Blessed Josemaría was aware of how the intellectual can be an influence for the good when confronting the ideas of the age.

“Have you seen the snowy peaks of the great mountains? They are the great ideas and the great intellects. They seem distant, remote, but from this snow comes the water that makes the valleys fertile”².

It can be seen from the writings of Blessed Josemaría (and indeed, of the Popes since the Second World War, and even before) that the work of the Christian intellectual has two aspects, one negative and the other positive. The “negative” or “defensive” aspect would consist of defending the truth against various attacks; and the “positive” or “constructive” aspect would be the work which

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Homily at the Jubilee event for University Teachers, September, 10, 2000.

² A. DE FUENMAYOR - V. GÓMEZ-IGLESIAS C. - J.L. ILLANES, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei. The History and defense of a charism*, Princeton, New Jersey 1994, p. 39, note 38.

takes man's knowledge of the truth further and deeper than before. This paper will look at the defensive aspect first and then go on to consider the constructive aspect at greater length.

Blessed Josemaría was also aware of the contrary effect of great intellects and how much damage they can do. "How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!"³. The water not only needs to fertilize the valleys but also counteract any harm done by people who are far from God. The water itself needs to be clean and pure, since polluted water will only kill the good seed or make the land barren. The parable of the sower as told by St. Matthew also shows how important it is to sow seed on good soil, because if not the water will have very little effect⁴.

There is therefore a particular concern and dynamism in the writings of Blessed Josemaría, as the result of his own personal experience and his personal prayer as well as his great knowledge of and sensitivity to the events and the activities of the world. His message showed just how much he responded to the approach taken by Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes* which looks at man in the world today and the role of the Church and the individual Christian.

"Further, when he applies himself to philosophy, history, mathematics, the natural sciences, or practices the arts, he can contribute in the highest degree to raising the human family to a more sublime appreciation of the true, the good and the beautiful, to a more comprehensive value judgement; he can help it to draw light from that marvellous Wisdom which from the beginning was beside God"⁵.

The fertility is the product of the energising and moving forces of the water. Blessed Josemaría had the vision, spiritual vitality and forethought to see that the Christian intellectual who is in touch with changes and indeed revolutions in ideas, and understands their impact on society, cannot be static or indifferent. He needs to be able to meet the challenges head on, and so re-evangelize the world. Indeed, he needs to be in the vanguard of intellectual change in order to defend the truth whilst at the same time understanding the crisis produced by the movement of modern thought further and further away from the Maker, challenging Him on so many fronts. The intellectual needs to keep up with a fast-changing world of ideas and theories. Bishop Javier Echevarría in a homily to the University of Navarre in June 2001 emphasizes this point when he quotes Blessed Josemaría, who was also addressing the University of Navarre in 1972 at the ceremony of conferment of honorary doctorates:

³ *James* 3,5.

⁴ *Matthew* 13,18-30.

⁵ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Apost. Const. *Gaudium et Spes*, 57.

“The University does not turn its back on any of the uncertainties, any of the concerns, any of the needs, that beset mankind... As it studies these problems with scientific depth it also stirs people’s hearts, fights passivity, rouses sleeping forces and forms citizens who are ready to build a more just society”⁶.

As long ago as 1946, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Blessed Josemaría was writing to his children in Opus Dei about the necessity of the intellectual being committed to labour for the health and salvation of minds and souls. Not only were countries needing to be rebuilt after years of destruction, but new political take-overs and alignments were spreading through fear, force and propaganda across vast territories of the world. In the face of the past and present world situation, numerous *isms* were being propounded as ways of coming to terms with a badly shaken world where eternal, objective truth was made to appear no longer valid. New trends of thought and approaches to living appeared in order to help man come to terms with this fragile, splintered society. They claimed to give it some sense, to view it in a different way, to explain it away, or to negate its very existence and sense. People’s minds were being flooded with existentialism, historicism, scientism, pragmatism, nihilism, the absurd, structuralism, modernism, post-modernism, Marxism, post-colonialism, feminism... Blessed Josemaría saw the imperative necessity of reaffirming the faith and re-expressing the Truth as the only way to true freedom: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”⁷. He stressed the development of the individual as a child of God, living in the middle of the world and needing to be educated to have the answer to these “isms” and be strong in the faith. The Christian intellectual needs to know what all these systems consist of in order to meet them and provide the true answers to the legitimate questions they raise, rather than simply avoiding them. If necessary, at the same time as studying the “isms”, the intellectual also needs to think out the antidote to take and to give others. Some of these systems directly attack the Christian faith and the principles on which it is based: the Christian intellectual must have the educational training to answer them when necessary in their own terms, putting the truth forward in ways that contemporary thinkers can understand and accept. In all of this work, the intellectual sees him or herself as an instrument of God to bring light to people’s minds. It is worth quoting from the letter in question, as it shows not only Blessed Josemaría’s concern but also his reactions to the problem and the dual level of activity required: both human and supernatural.

“The immediate task of directly ordering temporal realities in the light of the doctrinal principles enunciated by the Magisterium corresponds specifically

⁶ Quoted in *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y la Universidad*, Pamplona 1993, p. 98.

⁷ *John* 8, 32.

to the laity, who work immersed in all the circumstances and structures of secular life”. “Let us ask our King today to make us collaborate, humbly and fervently, in the divine task of mending what is broken, of saving what is lost, of fixing what man has put out of order, bringing to his destination whoever has gone off the right road, of reconstructing the harmony bringing to his destination whoever has gone off the the right road of all created things. [...] Only in this way can we set about this great undertaking, this immense, unending task of sanctifying all temporal structures from within, bringing to them the leaven of redemption”⁸.

Pope Pius XII was very much aware of this when he wrote his encyclical letter *Humani Generis* (*False Trends in Modern Teaching*) in 1950. As the title page points out, this encyclical is about “False opinions which threaten to sap the foundation of Catholic teaching”. The Pope makes a plea to theologians and philosophers, and this plea could in fact apply to all intellectuals:

“They have a grave responsibility for defending truth, both divine and human, and for instilling it into men’s minds; they must needs acquaint themselves with all these speculations, to a more or less extent erroneous; they must needs take them into account. Nay, it is their duty to have a thorough understanding of them. There is no curing a disease unless you have made a study of its symptoms”⁹.

In 2002 as in 1950, intellectuals in society need to be on their guard, since they have the task of refuting any attempt to reduce the faith or “adapt” it to the mentality and lifestyle of a particular age. In other words, intellectuals must continue to warn against the dangers of relativism in relation to eternal Truth. In order to be both forewarned and forearmed, the intellectual could not do better than adopt the three qualities advocated by St. Augustine in his book *De magistro*, Book III: fear of God, personal holiness and knowledge. The intellectual and the spiritual should not be separated from each other, let alone opposed to each other. Blessed Josemaría, with his foresight, energy and zeal for souls, encouraged the search for truth and for ways of expressing it. He encouraged intellectuals to push forward the frontiers of knowledge and not to remain passive.

Blessed Josemaría, while recognising the importance of the defensive work done by the intellectual to guard against errors, laid greater stress on the constructive, dynamic possibilities open to his work. His outlook was thoroughly contemporary, and, like St Paul at the Areopagus¹⁰, he understood the need to

⁸ *Conversations*, 11; *Christ is Passing By*, 183

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Humani Generis*, 9.

¹⁰ *Acts* 17,22-23.

lead intellectuals to God from where they were. The Christian intellectual needs to be there where horizons meet, where there is a fusion and unity between intellectual life and spiritual life. Intellectuals have the capacity and therefore the responsibility to re-energize culture and the world of ideas through their own unity of life and vision. The intellectual is like any other person who wants to participate in the work of redemption through his work. He is a worker like everyone else, but the impact of his work can have enormously wide repercussions. Just as a surgeon performing a very complicated operation may have the life of the patient in his hands by the very nature of his work, so the intellectual with his ideas may have the souls and minds of many people in his hands. Therefore his work for the good of souls, orientating them towards God, is a weighty and responsible one and is not just directed to people's minds but to the whole person.

“Many things, whether they be material, technical, economic, social, political or cultural, when left to themselves, or left in the hands of those who lack the light of faith, become formidable obstacles to the supernatural life. They form a sort of closed shop which is hostile to the Church. You, as a Christian and perhaps, as a research worker, writer, scientist, politician or labourer, have the duty to sanctify those things. Remember that the whole universe — as the Apostle says— is groaning as in the pangs of labour, awaiting the liberation of the children of God”¹¹.

The intellectual, like everyone else, is invited to meet Christ in the reality of the situation of his particular profession in the middle of the world, to transform it and purify it so that Christ may be there. In that way he has the possibility of leading people to God.

“To follow in Christ's footsteps, today's apostle does not need to reform anything, but even less has he to take no part in the contemporary affairs going on around him. He has only to act as the first Christians did, and give life to his environment”¹².

There is a call here to continue Christ's work and to share one's own work with Him, to co-redeem with him. This twenty-first century is no different from any other when man asks the fundamental questions about human life and eternity. The Holy Father states this very clearly at the beginning of his encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*:

¹¹ *Furrow*, 311.

¹² *Ibidem*, 320.

“They are the questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answers given to these questions decide the direction which people seek to give to their lives”¹³.

The intellectual, like everyone else, has the possibility of re-Christianizing the world, of being *Christ passing by*, of sanctifying society from within society; and to an even greater degree than others, since his work involves dealing with ideas and reason which in this day and age can so often become obstacles to faith as opposed to reinforcements of faith. He can choose to conform to the will of God, but first and foremost he has to know what God’s will is, and to know that, he needs virtues. The intellectual can be Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel who came to look for Jesus because he wanted advice and because he wanted to know more about his message, his vision of man and the world. Nicodemus asks a number of questions but does not get immediate answers, because before knowledge and learning, Jesus teaches him that he needs to know more about the things of God, and to do that he needs humility rather than reason. “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?”¹⁴ Being a teacher of Israel is not enough, and Nicodemus accepts that the virtue of humility is essential in order to understand the meaning of the divine teachings.

“Teacher: your undeniable keenness to know and to practise the best methods of helping your students acquire earthly knowledge is good. But be equally keen to know and to practise Christian asceticism, which is the only method of helping them and yourself to be better”¹⁵.

In order to assume the intellectual challenges of today’s world, maybe his intellect needs to be formed in the truths of God so that he can share in the spiritual wisdom that will lead him to God and also enable him to learn to carry out God’s will for him wherever he is and whatever he is doing. This elevates any work that is morally honest, and not just that of an intellectual. “It is not a question of carrying out a human enterprise, but of collaborating in the divine adventure of redemption”¹⁶. In an age where there is a crisis of faith and a reductionist view of man, the intellectual can collaborate “in the divine adventure of redemption” and can raise man to be “another Christ” working with the Creator for the good of creation. The intellectual can have the role of reconciling creation, and man as part of it, to God. This was a fundamental aspect of Blessed Josemaría’s message, which is about sanctifying the world but first sanctifying oneself.

¹³ JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Fides et ratio*, 1.

¹⁴ *John* 3,10.

¹⁵ *The Way*, 344.

¹⁶ A. DE FUENMAYOR et AL., *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, cit., p. 36.

“All the things of the earth, including material things and all the earthly and temporal activities of men, need to be raised up to God — and now, after sin, redeemed and reconciled — each in keeping with its own nature, in line with the immediate purpose God has given it...”¹⁷.

The intellectual can be an apostle, a witness to the faith and thus to truth, showing that this is the only real way to be free. Given that we are in an age that is going through a crisis of truth, the role of the intellectual who can testify to the truth not only by his thought but by his behaviour becomes vitally important. Personal holiness and unity of life, as well as a clear awareness of contemporary currents of thought, are necessary characteristics of anyone engaged in the task of showing and bringing Christ to others.

“We have to try to ensure that in all fields of intellectual activity there are upright people, people with a true Christian conscience, who are consistent in their lives, who can use the weapons of knowledge in the service of humanity and of the Church.

Their presence will be necessary because in the world there will always be, as there were when Jesus came to earth, new Herods who try to make use of knowledge — even if they have to falsify it — to persecute Christ and those who belong to him.

What a great task we have ahead of us!”¹⁸.

More so than many others, the intellectual can be at the forefront of the salvific mission of the Church, full of hope and a spirit of adventure and daring, finding in Christianity the necessary answers to the problems of today, and thus taking on a responsibility for the world and its activities, “bringing to them the leaven of redemption”¹⁹. The teachings of Blessed Josemaría are universal and open to contemporary thought and culture, whilst always being based on the rock of true faith and the magisterium of the Church. They contain no dialectical opposition or tension, still less a turning away from the world, but rather an eagerness and ability to find Christian answers and solutions to the problems and doubts thrown up by the modern age. The message of Christ as he showed it was not confined to a particular age but is relevant for any age by being eternal.

¹⁷ *Letter, 19- III-1954*, n. 7 in P. RODRIGUEZ-F. OCÁRIZ-J.L. ILLANES, *Opus Dei in the Church*, Princeton 1994, p 154.

¹⁸ *The Forge*, 636.

¹⁹ *Christ is Passing By*, 183

“Since you want to acquire a Catholic or universal mentality, here are some characteristics you should aim at:

a breadth of vision and a deepening insight into the things that remain alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy;

a proper and healthy desire which should not be frivolous, to present anew the standard teachings of traditional thought in philosophy and the interpretation of history;

a careful awareness of trends in science and contemporary thought;

and a positive and open attitude towards the current changes in society and in ways of living”²⁰.

Here indeed is a programme for and challenge to the intellectual in the middle of the world, each one of the areas being carefully and positively addressed. Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, who succeeded Blessed Josemaría as Prelate of Opus Dei, added a personal contribution to the Symposium *Holiness and the World* held in Rome in October 1993, commenting at length on this passage of *Furrow*. He underlined the positive links that exist between adhering to the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, and keeping up to date with tendencies in the contemporary cultural scene and in society as a whole. In other words, being a practising Catholic and following the orthodox teaching of the Church should never mean closing one’s eyes to the contemporary cultural scene. He further emphasised the dynamic which this represents in the teaching and writings of Blessed Josemaría.

“In Blessed Josemaría Escrivá’s thought orthodoxy is not something sclerotic and lifeless, able only to produce static intellectual and spiritual attitudes, which impoverish the Christian life. Quite the contrary: he sees orthodoxy as something alive and dynamic, ceaselessly oriented to giving new stimulus to evangelization and new vitality to the Church, opening up new frontiers for the spread of the Kingdom of God”²¹.

Blessed Josemaría’s love for the world helped him to have sufficient daring, inspired by faith, to look at innovations and change on their merits whilst always being aware of what could lead towards God and what could lead away from Him. The world is where Christ can be found and where the deposit of faith, which never changes, can be proclaimed. “...It is here, among the things which go to make up an ordinary life, a life knit into the lives of our contemporaries, that Christ wants to reign and should reign”²². In these modern times, the

²⁰ *Furrow*, 428.

²¹ A. DEL PORTILLO, *By way of Conclusion in Studies in the teaching of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá*, PAUL O’CALLAGHAN et AL., Editors, Princeton-Dublin-Chicago 1997, p. 294.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 296.

Church, through her pastors and especially the successors of St. Peter, continues to remind the faithful of the duty and responsibility they have to avoid any break between faith and culture but rather to make sure that there is an evangelization of culture. “They [cultures] have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed”²³. The “witness of life” that Pope Paul VI called for is given in the middle of the world by people who live by faith, in words and actions. Such people authentically bridge and heal the divide that exists between thought, knowledge and reason, and advances in the scientific and technological world, by impregnating them with the teaching of the Church so that they lead to truth and not away from it. In this way they become what Paul VI calls “servants of truth”.

“Men of learning — whether you be theologians, exegetes or historians — the work of evangelization needs your tireless work of research, and also care and tact in transmitting the truth to which your studies lead you but which is always greater than the heart of man, being the very truth of God”²⁴.

The writings and teachings of Blessed Josemaría always reflect these basic concerns of the Church, as well as always trying to find remedies for problematic contemporary situations. As well as endeavouring to sanctify work and sanctify himself or herself through work, the modern apostle and evangelizer needs to be well formed in the teachings of the Church, to be able to communicate these with humility, charity and love for souls. Blessed Josemaría’s concern for this found expression in his vision for establishing schools, institutes and universities in different parts of the world. He expressed himself very clearly on the subject of the University in an interview with Andrés Garrigó reproduced in *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer* which has as its title *The University at the Service of Contemporary Society*. As one would expect, there is a combination of the practical with concern for the common good of society. He addresses the running of a university which aims to produce “people who are well trained in order to build a more just society”²⁵. As well as training and educating good professionals there is above all a spiritual and supernatural concern for the souls of the students.

“A university from which religion is absent is an incomplete university. It neglects a fundamental facet of human personality, which does not exclude but rather presupposes other facets

...A Christian needs doctrine so as to be able to live by it and to give witness of Christ with example and word”²⁶.

²³ PAUL VI, Apos. Exh. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 78.

²⁵ *Conversations*, 82.

²⁶ *Conversations*, 73

This type of complete University training will help young people to use their freedom and to act with responsibility in society as well as furthering progress. “Since the problems facing mankind are multiple and complex (spiritual, cultural, social, financial etc.), university education must cover all these aspects”²⁷. This vision of the University is a fundamental characteristic of the contribution that Blessed Josemaría made to emphasising the role and responsibility of the intellectual in the world and is carried on by his successors with the same call “to stay in the vanguard”,

“...realising that only a culture that sets God as its fundamental, transcendental reference point, will be a culture that develops in favour of man, of all men, and especially all those in need. Then it will indeed be a culture that does not work against man, which is what happens, as we can see, when people try to do without the Creator, or to marginalise him”²⁸.

The University can send people out to work in all environments who can be witnesses to Christ and his teachings. In this way new paths and ways can be explored and studied in understanding the faith and searching for the truth whilst examining the findings of modern science and studies in the humanities, to see how these findings can be used to further the truth and communicate it. John Henry Newman emphasised the importance of having a trained intellect, and pointed out that even an intellect trained according to a system that was not entirely true, would get further than an intellect that had not been trained at all — such as, he specifies, that of a Christian who practises his faith but has never realised the truths that he holds. As for an intellect properly formed in the truth, he went on, “what may it not be expected to furnish to the dignity, the energy, and the influence of Truth!”²⁹ This formation of the intellect in the truth is the work of the University. The University, as Newman also pointed out, “is a place to fit men of the world for the world. We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principals and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them”³⁰.

Pope John XXIII in his address at the opening of the Second Vatican Council talked of “certain and unchangeable doctrine, always to be faithfully respected... and presented in a way which meets the needs of our time”³¹. The Popes

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ J. ECHEVARRÍA, Homily, 30 June 2001 at the University of Navarre.

²⁹ JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*, Notre Dame 1982, Preface, p. xliv.

³⁰ JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse IX, “Duties of the Church towards Knowledge”, p. 177.

³¹ JOHN XXIII, 11 October 1962.

through their messages more and more urgently address themselves to the faithful and especially the lay faithful, calling them to play their part in re-evangelizing the world and share in the mission to holiness by being what they are and by doing what they are doing. Pope John Paul II reminds us of this again in *Christi-fideles Laici* (1988) and, to a more specific group, in his *Letter to Artists* (1999). To this group he extends the invitation “to rediscover the depth of the spiritual and religious dimension which has been typical of art in its noblest forms in every age”³².

For the University to be able to respond to these many invitations and challenges, not only does the faith and the quest for eternal truth need to prevail, but each individual needs to contribute with his or her own struggle for holiness, and an awareness of his or her own littleness before the immensity of God. Humility is a basic requirement, as is unity of life, so that man is not divided against himself. “No! We cannot lead a double life. We cannot be like schizophrenics, if we want to be Christians. There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit”³³. “Unity of life” means that contemplative inner life and apostolate are brought together and lived out in earthly realities and social life. Knowing that one is a child of God gives a clear vision of one’s objective and one’s fundamental role in life: to do God’s will, not alone, but with God as one’s Father, recognising that every person one comes into contact with also has God for his Father; which makes him very special, gives him too a divine destiny. To be a child of God enables one “to detect the flashes of divine splendour which shine through the commonest everyday realities”, as Blessed Josemaría Escrivá put it; and this in turn can lead to an awareness of God’s presence, carrying its own transcendent invitation to help in the Redemption through one’s daily work and effort.

“You ask me, ‘Why that wooden cross?’ And I quote from a letter: ‘As I raise my eyes from the microscope, my sight comes to rest on the cross, black and empty. That cross without a corpus is a symbol; it has a meaning others won’t see. And I, tired out and on the point of abandoning my work, once again bring my eyes close to the lens and continue. For that lonely cross is calling for a pair of shoulders to bear it’”³⁴.

The University and all those who work there as well as intellectuals in all spheres of life can through the unity of their life use both their intellect and their faith to find solutions and answers to the many crises of today’s society. Blessed Josemaría was not daunted by the immensity of the task either on the human

³² JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Artists*, 14.

³³ *Conversations*, 114.

³⁴ *The Way*, 277.

level or on the divine level because for him the answer lay in sanctifying the world, starting with the very ordinary things within reach of everyone, and this can make an enormous contribution. It is this challenge that he presented to the University when he addressed the University of Navarre on October 8 1967. He does not give theoretical answers or even philosophical or pedagogical ones but rather goes to the point of personal holiness and sanctity:

“I assure you, my sons and daughters, that when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you repeatedly, and hammered away once and again on the idea that the Christian vocation consists of making heroic verse out of the prose of each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives”³⁵.

Blessed Josemaría makes a call for a deepening personal sanctity and appreciation of what it means to be a Christian in the middle of the world. José Luis Illanes brings this out in his article *Faith and Personal Freedom in Social and Political Conduct. Thoughts on some Teachings of Blessed Josemaría*. “...In his preaching the appeal made in the name of Christ leads directly not to specific activities of one kind or another, but to a broader reality: to everyday life”³⁶. Conversion on a personal level is what will enable individuals to help solve the problems of the world through making it a more just world and giving a metaphysical meaning to life; if intellectuals embrace this conversion, they will be able to resolve the crisis of doubt and unbelief which questions the meaning of life and finds no answers. Blessed Josemaría’s message involves the person in the unravelling of life in all its manifold manifestations and calls on the Christian to be involved in society with others, with whom he is already involved through charity and solidarity as Blessed Josemaría said: “He is a citizen of the city of men, and his soul longs for God”³⁷. The Christian intellectual needs to fight passivity, apathy and ignorance concerning the truths of the faith and to have very clear ideas himself, encouraging people to think, to be critical and to be alert so as to be able to react to the spreading of false ideas.

“There is an urgent need for spreading the doctrine of Christ. Store up your training, fill yourself with clear ideas, with the fullness of the Christian message, so that afterwards you can pass it on to others”³⁸.

³⁵ *Conversations*, 116.

³⁶ J.L. ILLANES, *Faith and Personal Freedom in Social and Political Conduct. Thoughts on some Teachings of Blessed Josemaría* in «Romana», 16 (2000), n. 31, p. 302.

³⁷ *Christ is Passing By*, 99.

³⁸ *The Forge*, 841.

The modern equivalent of the sower of the parable, the apostle in society, the re-evangelizer responding to the call “Go into the whole world” will go out with charity and understanding to meet those in need, to help people rediscover or discover for the first time the dignity of each human person and the infinite value of this dignity.

“Loving souls for God’s sake will make us love everyone: understanding, excusing, forgiving all. We should have a love that can cover the multitude of failings contrived by human wretchedness. We have to have a wonderful charity, *veritatem facientes in caritate*, defending the truth, without hurting anyone”³⁹.

Blessed Josemaría referred many times in his writings and messages to the fact that it is possible for an intellectual to fulfil his vocation in the middle of the world and that is where intellectuals can be contemplatives. “We are contemplatives in the midst of the world”. In his view, the intellectual should not live in an ivory tower of learning, surrounded by books or hunched over a computer, but out in society, living not an abstraction but a situation anchored in reality, living a life of prayer in work as Blessed Josemaría showed in his own life. Hence the following passage from *The Forge*: “Jesus, let my distraction be the other way round. Instead of recalling the world when I am engaged in conversation with you, let me rather recall you when I am engaged in the things of the world”⁴⁰. The intellectual as a contemplative in the middle of the world needs a relationship with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity for the Holy Spirit to inspire him with the Wisdom so necessary to discern the words and will of God, as Solomon pointed out at 1 Kings 3,5-12 (“Thy prayer is granted; hereby I grant thee a heart full of wisdom and discernment, beyond all that went before thee or shall come after thee”, 12).

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá does not set out a specific programme for intellectuals, no methodological scheme or outline; his message, however, contains a vision of the responsibilities of the intellectual in the world and the importance that virtues, especially humility and unity of life should play in his life. What Blessed Josemaría stressed are the responsibilities that the intellectual has in the world of the twenty-first century where the crisis of believing is most acute. The intellectual needs solid training in Christian teachings and interior life in order to pass on the correct criteria in faith and morals; a training which, with charity, means sensitivity to the common good and an ability to see the realities of society as making a positive contribution to his field of thought. As *Ecclesiasticus* reminds us, there is no true Wisdom without piety (“All wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with him, and is before all time”, Sirach 1,1).

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 559.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 1014.