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The Pope to UNIV: “Bear Joyful Witness to Christ in All Places”

Benedict XVI greeted the UNIV participants during his Wednesday audience, urging them to foster “a growing desire to meet Jesus Christ personally.”

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The Holy Father greeted students from 30 different countries who are taking part in the University Congress sponsored by the Personal

Prelature of Opus Dei. “You have come to Rome in Holy Week,” he said, “to experience faith, friendship, and spiritual enrichment.”

The topic of this year’s UNIV conference is: “Can Christianity inspire a global culture?” The Pope asked the young people “to reflect on the importance of your studies so as to form that ‘universal, catholic mentality’ St. Josemaría described as ‘a breadth of vision and a vigorous endeavor to study more deeply the things that are permanently alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy.’”

“May there be, in each of you,” the Pope said, “a growing desire to meet Jesus Christ personally, so as to bear joyful witness to Him in all places.” (The complete text is available on the Vatican website.)

At the end of the audience a delegation of students gave the Pope

a letter of gratitude and solidarity signed by the president of UNIV-2010, Robert Weber, from Austria. It reads: “Thank you for having invoked this Year of the Priest for the Church and for the world. We notice that many have taken advantage of some episodes that are painful for the Church and for the Pope, to spread doubts and suspicion. To these sowers of doubt we wish to say clearly that we do not accept their ideology. We hold respect for them, but we demand from them respect for our faith and the recognition of the right that we have to live as Christians in a pluralist society.”

The letter goes on to say: “Each one of us, including those who do not have the gift of faith, know in a personal way countless priests, university chaplains, parish priests, spiritual directors and confessors. We know them first hand, not by way of newspapers, and we are grateful

to them for their constant presence, availability, self-sacrifice, and openness to everyone. To all of them, and above all to the Pope, we wish to say: thank you!”

The letter ends with these words: “Thank you, your Holiness, for the courage with which you invite the faithful of the Church to follow Christ with a total gift of self, without allowing oneself to be intimidated by the bickering of reigning opinions. We thank God that He has given his flock a Shepherd that from the very first moment has declared the Church as young and alive as ever.”

What is UNIV?

The annual UNIV conferences began in 1968 under the inspiration and encouragement of St. Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei. Since then, participating students have been received each year by the Pope, beginning with Paul VI. The texts of

the papal messages are available at www.univforum.org .

Students taking part in UNIV come from more than 200 universities worldwide. Each year a topic is offered for their consideration in the various cultural activities that take place around the city of Rome: lectures, displays, debates, study groups, and discussions.

The conference program also offers spiritual activities organized by the Prelature of Opus Dei. In addition, UNIV provides an opportunity for students to get to know the history of Christian Rome.