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A Website for "UNIV"

UNIV began forty years ago thanks to the impetus of St. Josemaría Escrivá. University students from all over the world gather in Rome each year at Easter to discuss topics of current significance. A new website in six languages provides pertinent information.

03/10/2008

The new UNIV website (www.univforum.org) provides information for students planning to

attend the annual Holy Week congress in Rome. This year over 3,500 students will attend the congress, to be held from March 15 to 23. As in the past, the meeting will focus on a topic of current relevance: "Entertainment and Happiness in a Multimedia Society."

The congress provides several related contexts in which to explore this topic: academic meetings, concerts, lectures, visits to places of cultural interest, and the audience with Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square.

The website can be accessed in English, Spanish, Italian, French, German, and Portuguese. Its contents include the history of the UNIV congresses, which began forty years ago thanks to the encouragement of St. Josemaria. He wanted to offer university students from all over the world the opportunity to exchange

their ideas and ideals at the heart of the universal Church, and thus help foster a much-needed Christian humanism.

The academic aspect of UNIV centers on a plenary session addressed by a well-known invited speaker. This is followed by smaller working sessions or "cultural exchanges," as they are called, where students can express their views and engage in discussion. These working groups meet at different locations around the city in the course of the week.

The fact that the students come from all over the world enables them to compare their experiences with those of their peers from quite different countries and cultural contexts. Many of the participants present brief papers or display posters.

An award is presented each year for the best social improvement

initiatives. Thousands of the young people who have attended the UNIV congresses over the years have become volunteers in international social initiatives. Young people from Sweden have gone to Uganda; from Australia, to Vietnam; from Italy, to Nicaragua; and from Spain, to Kenya.

The new website presents documentation from past congresses as well as information on the 2008 meeting. The many topics studied over the past four decades provide a cultural heritage of great value which the website now makes readily available to all.

A section of the website on "Culture and University Life" offers articles and multimedia presentations on current cultural trends that both students and teachers will find helpful.

At the UNIV congress last year, Pope Benedict encouraged the young

people to take advantage of their time in Rome as "an occasion for a strong ecclesial experience so as to return home animated by a desire to serve Christ and mankind with greater generosity." On the new website one can access all the papal discourses to students at UNIV congresses, from Paul VI to Benedict XVI.

When meeting with students in the early UNIV congresses, St. Josemaría encouraged them to acquire during their years at the university the ideal "of work well done, of serious preparation for the future. People in thousands of places throughout the world are in need of strong arms and self-sacrificing personal initiative."

The university, St. Josemaría continued, "should not seek to form people who selfishly employ the benefits of their studies for themselves. Rather, it should prepare

young men and women to engage generously in tasks that will help others, in a spirit of Christian brotherhood."

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(03/19/2026)