

The meaning of the university

All human work, whether manual or intellectual, can be converted into a place to meet God and to serve others. Work in the university, when carried out with professional competence, is a source of harmony and solidarity among peoples.

01/13/2002

The inauguration of the academic year in two Italian student residences, Segesta in Palermo and

Torleone in Bologna, was the occasion for conferences on the meaning of the university in the light of the teachings of Blessed Josemaria. In Palermo, on November 17, the academic year of the Segesta Residence was inaugurated with an address by Professor Umberto Farri, President of the I.C.U. (Institute for University Cooperation). The title of his address was "Sowers of Peace and Joy: the Response of the University."

The President of I.C.U., who during the last years of Blessed Josemaria's life heard him speak frequently about the role of the university in the task of building peace, recalled that for the founder of Opus Dei work in the university, when carried out with professional competence, was a source of harmony and solidarity among peoples. He mentioned various initiatives that had been started through Blessed Josemaria's impetus in countries in Africa and

the Americas. Strathmore College in Nairobi (Kenya), the first interracial college in East Africa, is a good example. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a video was shown of a work camp carried out last summer by a sizable group of Italian, Peruvian, and Ecuadoran university students, who installed solar panels in villages in the Peruvian Andes that were not yet supplied with electricity.

Is there a university vocation?

In Peru, Blessed Josemaria "provided the impetus for the creation of the University of Piura, in a very underdeveloped geographical and cultural area," pointed out Professor Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti, of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, during the inauguration of the academic year at the Torleone University Residence in Bologna on November 11. That

university later was an important focus for the development of the entire city of Piura, he said. Professor Tanzella-Niti also recalled, in this connection, the founder of Opus Dei's teachings about work. All human work, whether manual or intellectual, can be converted into a place to meet God and to serve others. Addressing everyone present, the professor asked: "Is there a university vocation as such, in the sense of a call to carry out a mission in society?" "For Blessed Josemaria," Tanzella-Nitti insisted, "such a vocation existed, and it was part of the Christian vocation to sanctify human realities and to show that work was a path to sanctity. As a consequence, the university vocation should lead to scientifically rigorous and responsible work, which serves the human community and responds to God's will for all mankind." Continuing with this idea, he recalled that in *The Way*, the well-known

work of spirituality by Blessed Josemaria, one sees that study and professional competence are an occasion to practice charity. Point no. 340 is an example: "Study. Study in earnest. If you are to be salt and light, you need knowledge, capability. Or do you imagine that an idle and lazy life will entitle you to receive infused knowledge?"

The Rector of the University of Bologna attended the conference, along with the residents and their families and friends.

pdf | document generated automatically from <https://opusdei.org/en-za/article/the-meaning-of-the-university/> (01/18/2026)