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The Pope asks young people to communicate the happiness of finding Christ

At 11.30am today, Benedict XVI met with 6,500 young people taking part in the 39th edition of the UNIV meeting. Other people who took part were a large number of university professors and families who gathered in the Paul VI Auditorium in the Vatican. The topic of the UNIV 2006 meeting is “Projecting Culture: the language of the media”

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The Pope expressed the desire that new technologies and the media favor “personal relations, sincere dialogue and friendship among persons”.

Taking as a starting point the topic of friendship, Benedict XVI said that “it is necessary to have Jesus as one of your best friends, even more, the best. Then you will see that friendship with Him leads you to open yourselves to others, whom you consider your brothers and sisters, establishing with each one a relation of sincere love, because Jesus Christ is precisely the ‘love of God incarnate’ (*Deus caritas est*, 12)”.

“Whoever discovers Christ” continued the Pope, ends up leading others to Him because no one keeps

such a great joy to himself, but rather communicates it. This is the task to which the Lord calls you and this has to be your apostolate of friendship which Saint Josemaría, the Founder of Opus Dei describes as “friendship, self-sacrificing and sincere: face to face, heart to heart. (Saint Josemaria, *Furrow* 191)”.

According to the Pope, every Christian “is called to be a friend of God and with his grace, to attract his own friends to him. Apostolic love thus becomes an authentic passion that is expressed by communicating to others the happiness that has been found in Jesus. Once again, it is Saint Josemaría who reminds you of some key words of this spiritual journey of yours: ‘Communion, union, conversation, confidence: word, bread, love.’ (Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* 535).

Benedict XVI concluded his address by saying, “If you cultivate friendship with Jesus, if you assiduously frequent the sacraments, and especially the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist you will be this ‘new generation of apostles rooted in the word of Christ, capable of responding to the challenges of our time and prepared as well to spread the Gospel everywhere’ (Message for the XXI World Youth Day)”. (*The complete text of Benedict XVI’s address can be found in www.vatican.va.*)

Just before the Pope’s address, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Javier Echevarria spoke some words of greeting. “For a child of the Church, a meeting with the Holy Father is always a reason for deep joy”. On behalf of everyone, the Prelate assured the Pope that he puts “the prayer and work of these days in the hands of Mary who is the closest to

Christ on the Cross”. (*The complete text of this greeting can be found in www.opusdei.org*).

The students congratulated the Pope who would be celebrating his birthday next April 16 by singing for him the university anthem, *Gaudeamus igitur*, to which they added the words, “*Vivat semper iuvenis, Papa dilectissimus*”.

The president of UNIV 2006, the Kenyan born Anthony Gichuki also addressed some words to the Pope: “Holy Father, we would like to find Jesus Christ in our study and academic work, so as to be able to later communicate him to so many friends of ours” (*The text of this address can be found in www.icu.it*).

What is the UNIV

The UNIV meeting organized by the Institute for University Cooperation (ICU) was born in 1968 under the

inspiration and stimulus of Saint Josemaria Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei. Since then the participants have always been received in audience by the Pope, first Paul VI and then John Paul II. *The texts of UNIV messages can be found at www.icu.it*

For all of one week, the participants at the UNIV meeting, students from more than 200 universities worldwide, work on the topic proposed by ICU at different cultural activities in different parts of Rome. These events include conferences, seminars, expositions, debates, study groups and round tables. This year's topic is "Projecting culture: the language of the media". *The topics of the previous 38 editions can be found at www.icu.it.*

As a complement to the general programme, the Prelature of Opus Dei organizes activities of Christian formation. The meeting also offers

the participants a chance to get to know the city of Rome, following the footprints of the history of the Church from the first centuries.

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