

Seven
CHRISTIAN
WRITINGS

DAVID CORTADA HORTALÀ

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David Cortada was born in Banyoles in 1972 and grew up in Girona within a practising Catholic family of seven siblings. He continued his studies and completed his bachelor's and master's degree in Religious Sciences. Throughout his life he has worked in several sectors, which has given him a comprehensive experience in different fields.

During his life, he has met Christians who have significantly influenced his way of experiencing and seeing things such as the hermit of Alinyà, Lourdes Garriga; the hermit of Montserrat, Basili Girbau; the old Chinese Jesuit priest Peter Yang; the presbyter Josep M. Nogué; and others, who have become sources of the Christian wisdom reflected in this book. "Good always does good and evil always does evil" or "God's matters are simple, those of men are complicated" are two thoughts that reflect his experiences.

David Cortada offers us his reflections based on a very close reading of the Gospels. He brings together perspectives both from authorities acknowledged throughout the history of the Church and from thought in general, as well as from Christians with whom he has discussed the issues addressed in this book. He wonders about the meaning and practice of the Good News, and he does so without digressions, with a personal transparency to encourage readers to express their views. His reflections often take on the form of aphorisms and well-founded conclusions, making it accessible and easy to follow. *Seven Christian Writings* is a gentle invitation to frankly consider how we experience faith in our personal and community lives.

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BY WAY OF A FOREWORD

David is an active believer who has extensively explored the why and how of his faith — having graduated from the ISCRG (Higher Institute for Religious Sciences of Girona) — and in *Seven Christian Writings* he offers us his reflections based on a very close reading of the Gospels. To share these reflections he has opened doors and windows with observations from other witnesses who have helped him on this path and continue to do so. As the Church often reminds us, faith is founded on two pillars: on the God revealed and embodied in Jesus, and on the communion (community) with all brothers and sisters, which culminates in the Eucharistic celebration and practising charity. In the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exultate*, Francis stresses this: “Sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community” (point 142).

We are living in a time of rapid changes, of crisis in multiple spheres, including in beliefs. Faced with growing depersonalisation, globalisation in the name of great financial interests and marginalisation of religion in the Western world, the feeling of loneliness is becoming more acute in many women and men. However,

there are new calls for God's presence, for a sincere opening to transcendence. Almost a century ago, Max Weber wrote: "Science itself is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: What shall we do and how shall we live." Scepticism and relativism go hand in hand with a process of individualisation, of relegation of religious feeling to a private issue beyond public and community outreach.

In this context, David Cortada provides a fresh approach to encourage reflections as a basis for dialogue with anyone willing to listen. In a frank style, he explores the truths of faith straightforwardly and provides insights into the ecclesiastical Magisterium and the history of thought. In some sections, he cites objections that for so long have been argued from external fields and are even contrary to the Church's doctrine and responds to them from an apologetic viewpoint, based both on authoritative sources and his personal experiences. In all cases, he uses the texts of the New Testament. The ultimate aim is to awaken a return to the origins in readers, to what constitutes God's Word revealed and testified with the life, passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

Finally, I would like to highlight a distinctive feature of Seven Christian Writings, particularly in the sections "Reflections from the Gospels" (I, II, III): it provides maxims crafted concisely to enable us to grasp their essence. And I understand that the objective, rather than to be dogmatic, is to invite opinion. This book thus becomes a kind invitation to all those who may or may not be on the road to Jerusalem, as in the temple there was also the so-called "Court

of the Gentiles”, which Benedict XVI used as a motto for a way of approaching those who, without declaring themselves Christians, maintain an attitude of respectful dialogue with the Church, a community of faith in the resurrected Christ.

JORDI PLA, presbyter

EVANGELIC
REVIEW



INTRODUCTION

From the Gospels, what we know about Jesus before He came into the world is found at the beginning of Saint John (John 1: 1–3). In God there is the Father (who we identify with the Creator, and find in the Old Testament), the Son (who is made known by the incarnation), and the Holy Spirit (whose existence and action are made known to us through the testimony of Jesus). But the three are united as the one and only God. Today, whatever the parameters, we find that we are sometimes encouraged to understand more complicated things than this. Yet, the affairs of God are simple and those of men are complicated.

Reason is often good for us to understand the things but the problem arises when we are chained to it. Then we can no longer understand anything, and less so when we want to grasp what Jesus has done in us. What reason cannot explain, love makes clear. Jesus, in the union of the Holy Spirit and the Father, is the God of love and life.

During the early centuries of Christianity, the so-called Church Fathers discussed how it was that Jesus, being the way, the truth and the life, took so long to manifest Himself. But Isaiah provides the

answer by explaining that just as the heavens tower above the Earth, so God's thoughts are higher than those of men.

Jesus, the only Son of the Father, was made flesh in the virginal womb of a girl from Nazareth called Mary. Jesus was the Messiah, the Prophet, the King awaited by Israel to be delivered and who the scriptures had prophesied. But no one then thought that this deliverance would come from the Son of God incarnate, God Himself, and that He would do so not only for the nation of Israel but the whole world.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as the scriptures prophesied. God used the Roman census to lead Mary and her husband to the chosen town, where, as it was written, the Messiah would be born. Thus, from a historical perspective, we can see that God, the Lord, uses what He wants to carry out His plans, since He is the Almighty.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in a stable. Immediately from birth he was worshipped by some shepherds, to whom angels had appeared, and by Wise Men from the East who had followed the star announcing the birth of the Messiah (Matthew 2: 9–11). How can a star be placed over a room (was it a star, a light, an angel...?). Again, reason prevents us from grasping the nature of the miracle.

From His birth, Jesus was persecuted and so the innocent saints died (about twenty according to scholars) at the hands of King Herod, who did not want any rivals for his power. The Gospel According to Matthew says that Jesus, Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt and

settled there for a time in fear of Herod, who wanted to kill the child. Meanwhile, the Gospel According to Luke says that they returned to their village and soon after Mary presented her child in the temple in Jerusalem, as mothers did with their firstborn in Israel. When Mary presented Jesus to the Lord in the temple, a man called Simeon, who possessed the gift of the Holy Spirit, told her that “a sword will pierce through your own soul” (thus announcing how painfully she would experience the death of Jesus).

The Holy Family lived normally despite knowing about Jesus’ divine filiation. Thus, we read in the Gospels how the child was found in the temple talking to the teachers of the law (Luke 2: 46–52).

Jesus’ public life did not begin until he was thirty years old. He then spent three years teaching, healing and feeding the most in need until he was crucified.

PUBLIC LIFE

The Gospel According to John says that Jesus’ first miracle during His public life was at the wedding at Cana, where thanks to intercession of Mary He turned water into wine so that they would not be left without. According to the monk of Montserrat Basili Girbau, in this passage water is the symbol of life and wine the symbol of what is spiritual.

As the four Gospels say, Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest man ever born of woman. Meanwhile, John said of himself that he

was not worthy even to untie the straps of Jesus' sandals. Yet Jesus asked this great man to baptise Him.

Then Jesus went into the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1–11) and was tempted by the Devil. It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness. There the Devil promised him bread, miracles and kingdoms but Jesus, despite the weakness of forty days without eating or drinking, did not falter. This pleased the Father.

In His public life, Jesus did what He expects of all of us, which means throughout life giving food to those who need it, visiting the sick, and making known the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus was immediately followed by twelve disciples, who were most often in His company. However, there were other men and women who followed Him everywhere throughout His public life. Among the disciples was one who would betray Him, Judas. Jesus always knew this but He never gave into the weakness of setting him aside so as not to turn away from what the Father expected of Him: to give His life as a ransom for many people.

THE BEATITUDES

Jesus broke moulds in the societies of all times by proclaiming the Beatitudes. He said that the Kingdom of Heaven and all the promises of good and eternal life were for those who weep, for the compassionate, for those who are hungry, and so on, and also for the poor in spirit; that is, those who believe because they have received teaching without having seen or performed great miracles, or having received great spiritual or theological knowledge.

PRAYER

Jesus says many prayers in the Gospels (for example, Luke 10: 21). But the main one, which crowns all the others and that He explicitly leaves us, is the Lord's Prayer.

He begins by saying "Our Father, who art in heaven." Jesus said we should call no one Father other than God. In fact, the Father of Heaven acts as our father throughout our lives, advising us and giving us work and everything we have.

Then Jesus' prayer makes the first three supplications, which are designed to please God: "Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On Earth as it is in heaven."

Finally, he makes the last four supplications, which are for men: "Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we have also forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil." We observe that Christ's first supplication concerning men is that He should give us our daily bread; in this way we see a very intimate Jesus, as he first asks for what we most need to live.

ASPECTS OF HIS MESSAGE

Jesus' message is innovative, vigorous alive, and always modern no matter how many centuries go by. Jesus often uses very simple words to describe what must be done. Thus, he speaks simply and pleases God, avoiding the complications into which we often fall.

Jesus does not deny the hardships and persecutions of those who follow him (Matthew 10: 16–19) but regards them as far worthier, in every sense, than the path of those who do not want to believe (when He says that he who follows Him builds his house upon the rock, while he who does not follow Him builds his house upon the sand). Finally, Jesus says “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” to indicate that it is always better to live according to the Truth.

Jesus teaches many things: among them, He talks about loving our enemies, turning the other cheek when we are hurt, and not brandishing our good deeds in search of praise from others, but keeping them hidden (which pleases the Father). Jesus also teaches us not to judge others if we do not wish to be judged ourselves.

Jesus was hated because He denounced the evil in His society and in the world. Thus, through the parable of the wicked vinedressers, He foretold what would happen in Israel, and what would end up happening to their inheritance (Matthew 21: 33–46). In the final verses, He speaks of Himself as the stone rejected by the builders, which is now the main one that crowns the building.

When He speaks of the final judgment (Matthew 25: 31–46), Jesus says that people will be judged for what they have done. He adds that all the good done to others will have been done to Him. Similarly, all the evil that has been done to any person will have been done to Him. It should be noted that Jesus says that what you do to someone you do to Him, but does not say that He Himself is the other; rather that He and His Father will abide in those who believe in Him, and does not say that they will abide in everyone.

Finally, Jesus says He will send us the Holy Spirit when He departs. The Spirit is also given the names of “the Counsellor” or “the Spirit of Truth”, as it is what we Christians and people who do good but do not yet know Christ have in us. The Spirit speaks and evidences the truth, leads to the Lord, gives strength and enlightens.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Jesus gave His life to save the world, not to condemn it. He completely followed what the scriptures had said about His passion and death to please the Father. He never strayed, even in the most difficult times, as we read in the prayer of the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26: 37–39).

Jesus was considered by the Jewish authorities to be a rotten limb that should be amputated. He criticised the Pharisees for not applying the strictness they applied to others to themselves; and condemned everything about them as superfluous, saying they did not value what is most important (as the verse in Matthew 9:13 says: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice”).

According to the established law, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law did not have the power to execute anyone, so they passed the responsibility to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to execute Him. Thus, together, they executed Jesus on the cross. It must be said that Pontius Pilate had a brief dialogue with Jesus but, when he asked Him what the truth was (John 18: 37–38), Jesus did not answer, as Pilate did not believe.

In the trial and in the passion, Jesus could have tried to avoid death (Matthew 26: 53–54) but, like a lamb to the slaughter, He did not resist. The ill-treatment He received before His death is in Isaiah's prophecies about the Lord's Servant (Isaiah 50). Jesus died on the cross, the most ignominious death of the time, reserved for the damned. After a few hours of agony, He died spent and destroyed. From there He said, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabactani?", which means "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was buried in a tomb, and all His followers scattered and hid in fear of the Jews.

RESURRECTION

No one expected the resurrection, even though Jesus had told them about it on several occasions.

On Sunday, which was the third day after His death, Jesus was resurrected and appeared to those closest to him; and then, through prodigies and miracles, to many others.

ASCENSION

Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus said: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." And so it is, with His spiritual presence in the person of all who believe in Him. Jesus also stayed with us in the Eucharist, which as the Council of Trent proclaimed is "the body and blood together with the soul and divinity."

COMING OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus had to leave so that He could send His Spirit to us. So He announced this, and confirmed it in deeds. Jesus did not want to establish a kingdom like the other kingdoms of the Earth, where things are done as the king wants them for his earthly power, for salary or profits, following the laws and interests of each moment. Rather, what Jesus wanted was for His reign to be characterised by a feeling with Him and among we Christians, which would not have been possible if He had manifestly remained with us. Jesus established a new kingdom on Earth, a kingdom of hearts and deeds; a kingdom forever, with a king who is a Father.

On the day of Pentecost (fifty days after Jesus' resurrection), the Lord sent his Holy Spirit to the disciples (Acts 2: 1–4). Then His disciples, full of the power of the Spirit, went out and spread the Good News of the Gospel, confirming it with deeds and miracles.

THE RETURN OF JESUS

At the end of time, on a date that neither Jesus nor the angels know, Jesus will return in the same way He left; that is, raised above the Earth. Of course, His coming will be with great majesty and power.

However, first there will be great tribulation, persecutions and misfortunes all over the Earth; for a time, evil will have great power and it will be a difficult period for men, when believers will be tested.

But, by the power of Jesus, good will overcome evil and there will be a great judgment on the living and the dead.

As the Book of Revelation (20,14–15) says, the good will live forever and will not have to fear what will happen to the wicked, which is a second and final death.

After this, there will be a new Heaven and a new Earth where we will see Him forever more, and we will live with Him.

**GOOD DOES GOOD
AND EVIL DOES EVIL**

Based on Matthew 12: 22–28

Like the merchant who finds a pearl of great value and sells everything he possesses to buy it or the woman who while sweeping the house finds the silver coin she had lost and goes out to celebrate it with her friends, I have discovered, while listening to the Gospels, something of great value: good always does good and evil always does evil. When I speak of good and evil, it is both in the sense of spirituality and deeds.

The fragment of the Gospels from which I have drawn this knowledge is where it says that on one occasion Jesus was accused of being possessed by the Devil; then He, who knew the thoughts of those who accused Him, answered them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself; and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?”

An important conclusion from this passage is that one good will never work against another good; nor does one evil work against another evil. Out of a good never comes a bad thing and out of evil never comes a good thing. An evil always comes from another evil that already existed; but not from good. Similarly, a good comes from another.

Speaking with priest Narcís Costabella about this whole subject, he told me that it was not a theological or philosophical issue but an eminently practical one. Then he asked me: “So, do we have to do evil in order to do good ?”

Once, talking about this with a religious from Figueres, he told me that evil could become good, and that the most important example

of this was martyrdom, where a great evil becomes a great good. But in martyrdom, there is the good of the person who has exercised it throughout his life and the good of the one who enters the glory of Heaven (thanks to his perseverance and to the grace of God). And in martyrdom, there is also the evil of killing an innocent person and the evil of not allowing him to continue doing his good work. In this way, it is not that evil becomes good but that good follows its path and evil takes another: the one against the other. Moreover, speaking of martyrdom, it is also not that a great defeat in the Earth can be a great victory in Heaven: the victories in the Earth are victories for Heaven, and the defeats in the Earth are also defeats for Heaven.

A city police officer once told me that policing was a necessary evil. This observation caught my attention, and over the years I have refuted it: good is necessary but evil never is. In any case, the police officer should have said that his police force was a necessary service (and that, perhaps, its members sometimes commit unnecessary evils).

On this issue, Bishop Jaume, of Girona, added that good and evil are everywhere (and in everyone).

This evangelical reflection is not at all Manichaeian, as it does not attempt to divide all reality into good and evil but admits that there are things that simply are; they are neither good nor evil. In this regard, a professor of 'Ethics of Life' once said that there is a hierarchy according to which to defend something good you can do something evil (which is not as great as the good being defended). She gave the example of a lifeguard who slapped someone who was drowning to calm him down so he could be saved. But hitting someone drowning to calm him down was not an evil thing; it simply had to be done because there was no other remedy.

Good and evil are not found in things but in people.

Sometimes we attribute something to evil even when it is not, because we complicate ourselves too much.

The aim of this reflection is not perfectionism (as the hermit from Montserrat Basili Girbau said: “Perfectionism, which is an excess, is an evil”) but attempts to dismantle the fallacy that we sometimes have to do evil in order to do good.

What the Christian endeavours to do is to follow nature as nature is the work of God; and this is not incompatible with the good sought by Christians.

On this issue, the wisdom literature of the Books of Proverbs, of Wisdom and Sirach and even the Book of Job argue that good brings forth good fruit; Job also persevered in this.

Good has ways and fruits; evil has other ways and other fruits. The ways and fruits of good are good and healthy for people, while the ways and fruits of evil are harmful to them.

Once, talking to a Franciscan hermit, I asked her how it is that many people do not understand that they must do good to yield good fruits, and in contrast by doing evil they reap evil consequences. She replied that the Devil also works so that people do not realise that they must do good.

Nor can we ever speak of too much good. For example, when someone is said to be too good, it is not because there is too much good in him and this causes evil but because he is, for instance, too naïve. It is a fallacy to think that a lot of good ends up doing evil.

It must also be noted that one concept is the law and another is what is right. That is why we Christians find references in the Gospels.

Having observed this nature of things for years (that good always does good and evil always does evil), I have found this to be so, without exception.

It must be said that, of course, there is only one who is good which is God, and that, in all things, He exceeds our capacity to reason and judge.

REFLECTIONS
FROM THE GOSPELS
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On good and evil

Good does good and evil does evil.

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On some theories, studies and ideologies

He who goes beyond God is left without God (and He is revealed to us clearly in the person of Jesus Christ).

A professor of philosophical anthropology once commented that it is quite easy to criticise a theory or worldview; but the tricky thing is to construct one. But there is no need to construct a great new theory; Jesus has already told us how everything is. What is needed is to dismantle the fallacy castles built by the Enemy.

The concept of deification of man used by some theologians is false. When Jesus was accused of blasphemy for claiming to be the son of God, He said to them: “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If He called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” Thus, He made implicit reference in Psalm 82 where God ironically treats members of the chosen people who were doing evil as gods. A comment from Jesus, full of humility and irony towards those who accused him.

Just as the tabernacle is not deified, neither is man. Jesus never said or hinted at a deification of man.

Some, arguing that what is written in the Gospels is a form of language that seeks to explain a deeper reality than what we read at first glance, deny that many of the events that are narrated in them actually happened. This may be due to the relativism of today's society and the conversion of faith into a subject of study. But why was it that God, making things as simple as ever (bread and wine, forgiveness...), could not do everything foretold? Therefore, it is better to accept the simplicity of the Gospels (where Jesus says: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children").

Hopefully throughout history, with their experiences and the events they lived through (inquisition, the cross and the sword, communism, and so on...) all Christians would have remained in the simplicity of the Gospels.

Evolutionism, in the strict sense, is a false god. It denies the role of God in creation and believes that evolution is enough. But despite the millions of years that go by, the complexity of our life did not emerge from stone and gas. The fruits of strict evolutionism have been the denial of God, identifying us as a simple step in animal life, the grandiose spending of resources on searching for life or water on other planets for various reasons, reductionism of the human person... In addition, it does not explain where the raw material came from or what caused it. Today, God as such is denied entry into universities. In ancient times, in various cultures, one origin or another was given to man, which gave him a certain quality. It is symptomatic of the emptiness of spirit that what we are experiencing today is reflected in the empty theory of the

evolutionary origin of humanity and of everything (we no longer come from the gods but from nothing; and neither are we going anywhere). Strict evolutionists are no closer to the truth, nor do they bear better fruit, than those creationists who take the Bible literally. The hand of God and ethical scientific discoveries are not opposed, for one does not deny the other; but God speaks to man of all times in a language he understands. In the time of Jesus, one could not speak of an evolutionism led by God because man was not ready to understand it.

Marx's assertion that religion is the opium of the people and that this alienates them is a great fallacy. Christianity does not alienate anyone in the face of injustice. The Spirit does not allow anyone to be subjected to evil, whether in the context of a country, in the working conditions of a company, or wherever. The Spirit awakens consciences about one's own good and the common good. The Spirit leads us to truth and solidarity. Hopefully so many people had not been taken in by that fallacy. In addition, Marx is a reductionist in relation to man, rejecting his spiritual side. On the other hand, Nietzsche offers us a vitality and life that finally come to an end after many errors (and misunderstandings about God and Christianity). And Freud, the so-called third "master of suspicion", said that the conscious mind was only the tip of the iceberg, and that the rest was the unconscious mind; if that were so, the world would be waters.

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On the meaning of life

There is no need to always be looking for the meaning of life, or to give it a strange significance. It is just a matter of living a good life and then receiving eternal life. There is no more; this is the secret of life.

Spiritual adventurers, or those who want to try everything, easily end up in a sect.

If human life were to end in this world, existence would be meaningless, and for many it would not be worth living. But Jesus teaches us that this is not so.

Although some wonder where God was during the Nazi death camps, He was not absent; what was done to the victims was done to Him. And He will judge. This is what Jesus taught us.

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On the Gospels

In the life of the spirit some sow, others water... but everything is in the Gospels. Everything we need to know is there.

The language of the Gospels is not complicated and does not require great interpreters; everyone finds a message there for himself and for everyone. Jesus spoke thus, without interpreters. Otherwise, he who goes beyond God is left without God.

The New Testament may seem difficult at some points. But it is all in the Gospels, which are very simple, as I said.

If we encounter something contrary to the Gospels and this makes us falter, the Gospels will always prevail.

In the parable of the prodigal son, notice that the father says to the son that he has not been errant: “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.” To believers, this can make us see the immensity that the Lord provides to us to do good and move forward.

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On Mary

Just as light comes from the sun and is reflected in the moon, so good comes from God and is reflected in a special way in Mary; Mary’s support and light come from God; and her light often helps us in the nights of life. Men and women of many generations have tasted and appreciated the fruits of her intercession.

The litanies are no exaggeration. In fact, what are all these next to God Himself? Even Mary’s motherhood of Him is a very small thing next to what God Himself is. And those of us who pray to Mary enjoy her protection and her firm intercession.

To affirm the virginity of Mary in giving birth to Jesus is to say that the Gospels tell the truth and to acknowledge God’s fatherhood in Jesus. What the Father has given to the Son is worth more than anything and will not be taken away from Him.

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On Jesus

The Christian does not fall in love with an ideology or even a doctrine but with the person of Jesus Christ.

The Eucharist contains the body and blood of Christ. If anyone fails to see it that way, it is because the chains of reason say to him: “How can this bread and this wine be the body and blood of Christ?” But that is how Jesus, who made everything simple, wanted it.

As the Council of Trent said, the Eucharist contains the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. And the angel of Fatima, in 1916, added: “Present in all the tabernacles of the world.”

Jesus’ last words on the cross were: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The Father had to be separated from the Son in order for Him to die.

Some people can say anything about Jesus Christ but Christians believe what He says about Himself, that he is God and man. This means believing that He is telling the truth.

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On enemies

It is true that there are enemies, Jesus speaks of this in the Gospels and says that we must love them; hence the very apt advice of a hermit who said: “Don’t see anyone as an enemy” (without of course approving of his evil deeds).

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On faith

Fashionable languages are not necessary to present faith; nor, as some say, are great theological or cultural bridges needed for it to be accepted in all nations. But you do need to go back to the roots, to the Gospels.

If there are no miracles today, it is because there is no faith. On one occasion Jesus went to His village, but He could not work many miracles because they did not believe in Him. Without faith there are no miracles. If you have faith as tiny as a seed, you can tell a mulberry tree to uproot and plant itself in the sea and it will.

Some say they have no faith but crave it. They should be told that not everyone has faith but everyone can ask for it.

Children should be taught to pray, for faith comes from praying to God, and from that comes love for Him. Letting them choose when they are so young, or expecting them to do so when they are older, is giving them a responsibility they cannot take on.

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On the Church

In medieval times, what attracted crowds, despite the worldly power in between, was the essence of the Gospels. At that time, despite great paraphernalia in the Church, there was also a great deal of faith.

It is absolutely false that the Church is divided into a hierarchy on one side and a base on the other. Christ makes us one even though

there are different parts. One part of the body cannot tell another that it is not part of the body because it is different.

The Church is not powerful in the worldly sense of the word; it was once, but is no longer. Its significance in today's world lies in its values and deeds. Today it is a pleasure to see it offering its services.

When we speak of the "Mother Church", we must not say whether or not it is so while rejecting it with a superficial analysis. In disadvantaged areas of the planet, there are many Christian communities that, despite hunger and disease, receive with great joy the spiritual food that the Church brings them. Rather, what we need to begin to value is whether one has received and is receiving solid nourishment and instruction for a dignified, Christian life.

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On miracles

An old priest told me about miracles and exorcisms performed by some of his acquaintances. But now, faith is expressed differently: for example, while the Gospels tell us that neither serpents nor any deadly thing will hurt us, today this means to help all those in need, with the progress of the science and medicine. It also refers, in a figurative sense, to the fact that Christians will not succumb in their faith to the wicked and the effects of their deeds.

It must be said that in Fatima's appearance in 1917 miracles were worked in front of tens of thousands of people and the press and cannot be explained by reason. This should be acknowledged, as it cannot be done by suggestion or trickery.

In another of Fatima's messages, the Virgin Mary said that more souls go to hell because of the sins of the flesh than for any other reason.

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On what some things are

An old friend of mine, to be ordained a priest in the 1930s, wrote an academic study on angels in the Christian tradition. Fifty years later, he told me that everyone has an angel that watches over them; some people, because of their special need, have two. Every country and institution also has an angel.

An old priest recommended saying a prayer as the last action of the day, after everything has been done.

Charlemagne spoke to the Saracens who invaded the Iberian Peninsula in their language. At that time, it was necessary to speak this language to avoid succumbing (as happened in North Africa, where there had been a great rise of Christianity in the first centuries, which disappeared). Let's recall what the Lord said: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Someone gave the practical piece of advice that people must behave like street dogs: keep wandering; if it smells of love, you stay, if not, you go elsewhere. We could say the same about many

situations in life and even TV movies, where what really bores us is the lack of love reflected.

Humility is truth. If you are told something and you respond with the truth, you are humble.

Sometimes we believe ourselves essential to do a good thing but in reality only God is necessary to do this good. We are instruments of God.

The man, alone, can do nothing, but God can do everything; this is why we must allow Him to do good through us.

To achieve eternal life in Heaven, you do not need to be a mystic or have great experiences of faith. Those to whom the Beatitudes are addressed know nothing of this.

There are paranormal phenomena, whatever it may be, about which we know nothing, only obscure things. In contrast, Jesus, God, manifested Himself clearly and appears to us in the simplest way.

To know each person, we use Jesus' words: "You will know them by their fruits." And "no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit."

Miracles are described in the Bible because there the necessary faith existed to perform them and for them to bring forth fruits. God also intervened in wars because at the time people expressed themselves in this way (they were beasts). And today God appears to us differently and in other ways. It is a matter of languages. We must not seek to interpret the old from our "here and now".

We usually identify love with a person's heart. We should remember that the heart can be good or evil (Jesus said that out of the heart

also comes everything that pollutes the person such as adultery, theft and injury). In contrast, love is always good. Sometimes out of love we renounce what the heart would make us do.

Once, a Chinese priest, speaking to a group about Christianity, said “look,” and he pointed to the statue of a Buddha seated in the lotus position, smiling and fat. Then, he pointed to a cross with the suffering Christ and said: “Look there.” And added: “It is clear, isn’t it?” It was evident that the former expressed the flight from suffering and, the latter, giving absolutely everything for others. Two completely different conceptions.

Evil uses fear as a tool to deter us from doing good. For this reason, the Gospels quite often advise us not to be afraid.

When we are strongly tempted but want to persevere in good, we can say: “Lord, I reject sin, illness and death.”

On sacrifices and offerings, it is worth noting that the sacrifices that the Lord wants are not so much about going without things we need or afflicting ourselves with pains but rather doing what should be done. And a good and smart way to take advantage of difficulties is to offer them to Him.

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On Christianity

Jesus does not give us a theory, an abstraction or a connotation. He tells us about things as they are.

A professor said that all religions, governed by reason, lead you to the same place. But this is not what Jesus said. He said, implicitly and explicitly, that He was the way, the truth and the life (and not one of the ways, one of the truths and one of the lives). That professor also compared knowledge of God and doing His will to climbing a mountain; but Christianity emphasised that it is God who has come to save man.

The emergence of Christianity brought great dignity to people who had previously lacked it.

On religions, Jesus says in the Gospels that those who had come before Him were thieves and robbers. This means that He is the Saviour we had to await.

God has always been the strongest, the mighty and for whom the final victory (and therefore eternity) is reserved. But Christians will be tested, as gold is tested in the furnace.

We cannot speak of Christian fundamentalism because the Christian is not a fundamentalist. The fact that a fundamentalist calls himself Christian is a different matter.

We should consider as Christian what the Gospels say rather than everything makes someone who considers himself like this. Thus, all the negative episodes throughout history attributed to Christianity (inquisition, the cross and the sword, invasions against the axes of evil...) not only are not Christian because they are not in the Gospels but contradict the teachings of Jesus.

Christianity cannot validate the death penalty. You can never tell someone: "You have to die for what you've done" and less that you do so with the consent of Jesus (the God of love and life).

We know that, apart from being good we must believe in Him; this is what Jesus manifested when, before ascending to Heaven, He gave the command to evangelise other peoples.

As an old Chinese priest said about attending Sunday mass: “Believing and not practising is to take God as a fool... and God is no fool.”

Love your neighbour as yourself is one of the greatest commandments God gave us. But, as the Gospels say, to consider the other one as a brother is something He has left to be shared by Christians themselves.

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On the family

Not all couple relationship is in accordance with nature. Wanting to open up moral consent can confuse many people who would otherwise do well. This may be a false show of mercy.

Marriage is for life, as Jesus says. If things go badly, they can separate but the bond continues. If one of them has entered a relationship with another, he or she will be in an illicit situation and may find guidance in Jesus’ parable in which two men go up to the temple to pray: one considered himself to be righteous and was not forgiven while the other was aware of being a sinner, asked for forgiveness and received forgiveness.

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On life

Permitting euthanasia would mean opening the doors to the culture of death and allowing it in. The outcome would be harmful and uncertain. The sweet spot is, without taking life, to avoid as far as possible the sufferings of the sick person without extending life with many patches.

Abortion is not justifiable because the life of another can never be taken. The cell resulting from the union of the father's spermatozoon and the mother's ovum already contains all the unborn child's own genetic makeup, which is different from that of its parents. It is, therefore, an individual in development and dependant on the mother. Accepting abortion or the morning-after pill is fake progressivism. If there are so many abortions, it is because the embryo cannot defend itself.

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On God the Father

Jesus said that here on Earth we give no one the name of father, or guide, or master, because this can only be God. In fact, He is the only father we have throughout life, who instructs us and puts food on the table. God always takes care of us physically and spiritually.

The meaning of the whole of creation is to give glory to God; a glory that God does not need but wants. This is the meaning of existence.

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On society

Man does not support himself, nor is self-sufficient: as soon as God vanishes from our lives or our society, idols appear.

The Christian religion should be taught in schools; not for cultural reasons but because of the huge need for Christian values in our society, which it increasingly lacks.

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REFLECTIONS
FROM THE GOSPELS
II

On marriage

On their 75th anniversary, an old couple told the priest holding mass: “The secret of marriage is having the loyalty of dogs and the discretion of cats.”

Marriage is like a vegetable garden: it depends on what you put in it. If you allow weeds, they will grow, expand and have their effect. In contrast, if you pull them up as soon as they appear, the fruits will be abundant and good. These weeds can range from monotony to evil thoughts or not treating your partner well enough.

On sexual relations, an old priest said in one sermon that every time is different with the partner you love and to whom you are faithful. Similarly, a consummate catholic said that with age the frequency of sexual relations decreases and the quality increases. These two facts are very far from the clichés often spread by the media and that weigh against marriage.

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On abortion

Some say that if the unborn child will have a disability an abortion is justified. They should be asked what they would prefer: being born and living in love as a disabled person or being aborted before birth.

In today’s society, many take an easy comfortable life very seriously; yet they do not apply the same seriousness to the life of the unborn child.

Having an abortion is not at all conducive to the pregnant woman's psychological wellbeing. This is not the right or easy way.

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On God

Among some believers there is a trend to say that God is the father and mother; but Jesus manifested God only as a father. Indeed, we speak of Mother Nature or the motherland, for example, because it is the environment in which we are born and grow up. God, in contrast, is the father who has put us here and supports us.

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On what some things are

The aim is not to do big or very special things but simply to do good, and God will give value to what we do.

We men, on our own, cannot do anything; we are both good and evil in equal measure. That is why, if we do something good, we must thank Him.

Some tycoons or political leaders often speak of doing great things and of very special events. But what is the use of doing something great if it is evil? Thus, we see that it is much greater to give a coin to a poor person than to do something evil that affects many people. It will always be more four in positive than ten thousand in negative.

Jesus says that he who lives will die, but he who gives his life for Him will never die. He refers to the fact that if we live thinking only of ourselves and being selfish we will not live forever; but if, in contrast, we strive to do good, even renouncing ourselves when necessary, He will give us life.

It is good, and possible, to speak of the glory of countries; they all have their own. Another thing are the atrocities sometimes perpetrated through history in the name of this glory; this is no longer glory but putrefaction.

To show that many things do not come from evil but from the fact that we complicate ourselves, an old hermit told the following story: “Once, in a convent, there were monks who, while fasting, were very hungry. One night, a novice could not bear it any longer: he went to look for an egg and put it on top of an upended roll of parchment with the candle at the bottom to cook it. The novice master passed by, caught him and let out a cry of alarm telling him: ‘The demon has made you do this.’ Then a voice was heard from the depths of hell shouting: ‘No, this would never have crossed my mind.’”

God gives his Spirit to those who act well; and He does so without measure. He is the Spirit of Truth and the protector that brings forth fruits such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those who act badly possess something quite different: the spirit of error. This swims in a sea of fallacies and separates people from the light; yielding all kinds of bad fruit and bringing things to a bad end.

As a priest said: “It is not possible to pray lying down. The only ones who can pray lying down are those who are sick.”

However much some struggle to subject and crush others, many will not change because of mistreatment and injustice. They are driven by other things, such as good, reason or solidarity, which do affect their behaviour.

Critical sense is essential; look at Jesus, He was blessed with it. The opposite happens with sects, which reject any such thing. When I was young I visited a friend of mine who was in a sect and one of its leaders, speaking of philosophy, said: “We teach our children languages, maths and chemistry. What we will never do is teach them philosophy or the thoughts of Kant...”

The history of peoples is not the history of dynasties. Some has sought to deliberately confuse many people with this issue.

As the old hermit of a monastery said, being Christian is different from being a benefactor. Being a benefactor is related to what Jesus said: “Who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” But being a Christian means much more.

Although some say that today there are more values than before or that they are simply different, I would like to emphasise that today there is a slight decline in values in the sense that they usually vanish when one’s own comfort or stability is threatened.

We Christians do not put hope in our merits or in our acts, but in Him.

Jesus says that we must not be afraid of those who can kill the body but of those who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Moreover, if we really want to fight against the evils that afflict our

or other societies, it is best to do good. Instead of being afraid, this is the best we can do to ensure that we and others do not have to suffer any evil.

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On the Bible

In the Bible, in Isaiah, we find that the prophet speaks of a special servant who has to undertake a great task for the Lord. It fully refers to Jesus; however, insofar as we Christians shape ourselves in Him, any Christian's way of acting, living and serving is also reflected there to a greater or lesser extent. This is why we see the life and situation of other Christians who have preceded us reflected in it.

The Bible is, for many, a great unknown. It is a book full of wisdom and knowledge of God and men. Thus, the Book of Sirach says that as the people's judges are, so will their officials be; that the tongue of a bad person has destroyed mighty cities and overthrown entire houses; or that you will know what kind of person someone is by how he dresses, laughs or walks.

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REFLECTIONS
FROM THE GOSPEL
III

On what some things are

Someone said: “Experience trains, coexistence perfects.” And also: “Put on your light and put out your brightness.”

Truth is like a diamond: it is a single whole, although it has many sides. There are not as many truths as people; that would be chaos. The truth is what it is, everyone sees it from where they are and it is often good to reach it. The evils of relativism vanish when we have the certainty that there is one truth to reach.

As an old hermit wisely said: “Do not desire to know everything.”

Angels are much stronger and smarter than men. The manifest interventions of angels in human history have been important, but occasional. When the apostle Peter was rescued from prison by an angel, he simply made the chains fall from his hands. Note that the strongest men in the world are far from doing such a thing.

When someone mentioned a whole set of grievances addressed to one person, he was told: “This is spitting fire.” And so it is: experience teaches us that we do not achieve anything by enumerating lots of negative events, even if they are all true. It is better to approach things differently.

The Lord has made each and every nation, a reality that surpasses us and defines us beyond ourselves or our own family. Some say “my country first.” Of course! It is equally logical that you know your family better and hold them in greater esteem. The fallacy

committed by some who use this refrain to disregard and hurt other people is another matter.

Someone once maliciously said that people want to be deceived. And, although a trader agreed with him, the truth is that people do not want to be deceived; when people find themselves in a situation, their eyes seek out the truth. And you do not want such an erroneous conception of your fellow man.

Some speak of structures of sin, but this is bold and complicated. When the Gospels speak of a good tree or a corrupt tree, and of its fruits, they are referring to the individual.

As the hermit of a well-known monastery said, the Christian's fast consists of breakfast something, a normal lunch and a simple dinner.

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On God

Some question the action of God for certain reasons. But do not be misled. If the rules and working of things in this life are really as Jesus said (that there is a fair judgement at the end of earthly life, that He helps but we are free...), we would do what God has been doing throughout history.

A theology professor argued that in today's society everything moves very quickly and that God does not move in immediacy. But the truth is that God is not like a whale that needs large spaces and certain conditions to move. He has no limitations.

When Moses asked God what he should say if he is asked His name, the Lord told him to say: tell them “I AM” sends you. And so it is: if anyone is, it is Him. We, the people, are and are not: yesterday we were not, today perhaps we are something, and tomorrow who knows. Perhaps for this reason, the old Chinese priest said that it would be quite wrong for someone to say “I am.”

The Lord uses what He wants and how He wants to carry out his intentions. Let’s look at three examples: first, to end slavery Jesus did not confront it explicitly with what He said (there is no evidence that He spoke about this issue) but His teaching is imbued with rejection of oppression; and slavery has been gradually eradicated over the years. Secondly, and in the case of the colonisations with the cross and the sword, we know that Jesus specifically stated in his preaching that when on the last day those who acted in this manner are judged, He will condemn them by saying that He does not know them at all (Matthew 7: 21–23). In the third place it is also quite understandable that God allowed the crusades to be lost because He did not want to prevail or be recognised through the use of the sword but live as a father through the free and full conversion of people.

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On prayer

A theologian stated that there are relaxation techniques to be used while saying the rosary. But, when you speak with someone, when you communicate, you are not concerned about having to relax.

There are some who during the rosary think about what they are asking for or those for whom they are praying. Once, the Missionaries of Charity, to whom Theresa of Calcutta belonged, were in Vatican Square listening to the Pontiff when it began to rain. Then they started praying for the rain to stop. They were so deep in their prayers that they continued praying when the rain had already stopped. Like them, when we say the rosary we must not think about our concerns or about those for whom we pray but must meditate on each mystery of the rosary that we contemplate (and we will often find new aspects), and Mary, who knows what we are asking for and what we need, will intercede for us.

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On Christians

It has been argued that Christianity is joy and that the Christian should be joyful. But being a Christian is much more than this joy (as we often see in the Gospels, for example, in the Beatitudes). This joy reconciles well with being Christian but, sometimes, it can result from excitement or something else.

If a Christian manages to convince others who do not believe that the relationship between a man and God is between them both, and that God's teaching is in the Gospels, then he will have done the greatest good possible. The Church exists to enable this way, with the Word and the Sacraments.

Several theologians argue that the Creed can only be prayed individually (by saying "I believe") rather than as a community (by

saying “we believe”) because theologically it is not conceivable in any other way. Moreover, they say that one cannot respond for the faith of others. But notice that you say the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus taught using the plural voice, and that Jesus said about those who believe in Him: “That they all may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee” (John 17: 21). And there is also the fact that we Christians often have a very poor sense of community. If when we pray we said “we believe”, the Creed, the community and ourselves would take on great strength.

I once asked an old hermit what a Christian must do now that, following world events, it seemed that everything was coming to an end. She answered: “Trust in Jesus.”

God does not want the sinner’s death and we Christians do not set ourselves against people who act badly. We do not fight against the people who act badly but against the evil they do. As in Ephesians 6, 12, we do not wrestle against flesh–and–blood enemies but against the forces of evil that exist in the universe.

A prestigious Catholic biblical scholar said that he preferred the saints in the Old Testament to the later ones because they seemed more human while the latter seemed like plaster saints. There is a significant self–criticism in this.

The greatest blessing that we men have received is that doing what God wants and what suits us is the same thing. When in the Gospels Jesus says that you have to love God more than your wife, mother or children, it is so; but, nevertheless, far from distancing

yourself from your loved ones, Jesus makes you love them more and give them the best of you. Thus, you do not have to choose between them.

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On the Church

An agnostic questioned the role of the Church in history by saying that sometimes it had blessed people and things that were not at all benign. But the truth is that the result of those blessings, like the result of all blessings, is to help ensure that what is blessed is done for good and is successful rather than giving it blind power. As the New Testament says, “bless and do not curse.”

Today you have to buy a ticket to enter some Catholic churches; but this is not the spirit of Jesus. If this is an economic issue, if we cannot look after so much heritage it is because it is unnecessary.

On a theology course, the professor and students argued that the Church is an institution like any other, with good and bad things. But two clarifications: the fact that the Church has an institutional side does not mean that it is limited to this, but that it is God’s people. And, second, if it were just an institution, what difference would there be in belonging to a football club or volunteering for an NGO and how would it be better?

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On marriage

As an old lady said to a couple that told her they were getting married, marriage means knowing how to conform.

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On some of today's most burning issues

Today there is a serious conflict over the issue of immigration, and about what to do. Of course, people do not want to abandon everything and leave their countries; and less so given how they are often treated abroad. For this reason, and for everyone's benefit, they need to be helped in their own countries. Let us recall the case of the Good Samaritan: he helped the poor man but did not take him home, it was neither the necessary nor best thing to do, but rather ensured his rescue from that situation by taking him to a safe place and offering some silver coins to the innkeeper for his lodging. If we do not help migrants in their countries, we will not resolve the issue, either for them or us.

One of the foundations used to support terrorism is its legitimacy. Although a defensive war is legitimate — speaking from a human, ethical and religious point of view —, terrorism is very different. There are some who, wittingly, have presented terrorism as a defensive war (and, therefore, legitimate) but it is not. Entering another's house and committing an atrocity is not war but murder. We will stop the flow of terrorism when we persuade those who regard it as legitimate that it is not.

One day, in a meeting with other Christians to comment on the Gospels, we mentioned a recent terrorist attack. We concluded that we want to reach truth to do good, and we want to do good to prevent such evils.

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On miracles

In the Fatima Apparitions, Lucia asked the Virgin Mary why some of the requests made by the villagers had not been granted. She replied that God did not grant them what they asked for because He did not trust in them. The Lord must be given reasons to trust.

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On the Gospels

A hermit said that the Gospel is so simple that no one could have imagined inventing such a thing. And that, therefore, it can only come from God.

There has been talk of a second evangelisation, of a new evangelisation or of re-evangelisation (of Europe, of families, whatever); but all of this is complicated: quite simply, each and every one of us must continue to evangelise ourselves, with that simplicity of the early Christians.

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THE FRUITS OF VALUES

In a lecture on pedagogy, a professor posed the question about what values are at a time when talking about this subject is highly relative. He argued that what for some is a value for others is not. He also said that for some stealing the money of others is a value. It is in the midst of so much fragility and need for clarification that this article's viewpoint emerges.

We can begin by saying that all those values that lead to personal and common good can be labelled as such; and that, in contrast, those attitudes and assessments that lead to evil are counter-values. Thus, we know that not all things are values.

In our society, there is a subtle yet marked decline in values. We notice it when we see the attitudes of children and adults not driven so much by moral principles, as was usual in our parents' time, and not only here in our country but throughout the world. We cannot demand that society in general should have faith but we must show it the great benefit of the practice of values. We find a very clear example in marriage, where today's society throws up so many reasons and resources for division while the Christian vision provides tools for reconciliation. And the fruits of both are crystal clear.

To put values into practice and make them yield fruits we cannot be naïve or reckless because this could cause the opposite effects. This is why Jesus said: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." He also said that: "You will know them by their fruits" and "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bears good fruit." In a society as complex as ours where there is such great relativism, it is sometimes hard to know or recognise what is appropriate. For this reason, this advice from Jesus is very useful to easily elucidate what to do. In this way we will not be deceived.

The crisis of values is like a polluted river that pollutes all the others, thereby becoming the cause all other crises: financial, labour, environmental, cultural, political... For example, regardless of how many banknotes fall from the sky, what use is it if we share them out unfairly? But, if we have the values of justice and solidarity, with the money we earn from working there will be enough for all. Otherwise, some will never be able to compete with others, and in a world without values, how will they manage?

A factor in favour of what we have today is that there is a great capacity for transmitting and assimilating values. This did not happen before. But the higher educational level, schooling and the great communication that currently exists means that we are not as resistant to change as in older societies and that we can have and practice values if we regard them as possible and good.

Finally, it is worth stressing that the fruits of values are always good, and the fruits of counter-values are always bad. What a great fallacy it would be to say that out of evil comes a good thing (or should we commit evil because good can come of it?). For this reason, if we take a picture of someone with values we will always find that this person has the best fruits (longer life, greater freedom, better relations, more plenitude, joy...) and that he is often successful; while if we look at someone who practises counter-values we will realise that he has negative fruits (dangers, instability, damage to himself and to others...). Because this is what the Lord has done. Another way of seeing things is to realise what we would gain by integrating any counter-value in the tangible reality of our lives; and, without falling into perfectionism, we should consider what we would gain by practising and experiencing values even more.

CHRISTIANS,
ONE PEOPLE

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, FROM 18 TO 25 JANUARY, ENCOURAGED THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE, A THEOLOGY STUDENT, TO WRITE THIS PIECE, BASED ON REFLECTION AND LIFE.

One year ago and as a result of an assignment I had to do for an Ecumenism course, which formed part of my theology studies, I had the opportunity to interview in a Coptic orthodox church in Barcelona a deacon of that community. The meeting made me aware of the valuable work they do. The thirty-five families that formed part of that community only had the ground floor of a very simple building for mass and the catechism. Given this problem they informed the local Catholic Church about the situation, with a request for larger and more suitable premises. The Coptic deacon told me that unfortunately after two years nothing had changed. He also added that every year at Christmas and Easter they received visits and congratulations from other Catholic priests based in Barcelona. And I wondered: “Yes, but... do you mean that the members of this community are really treated as brothers?”

AS A RESULT OF THIS EXPERIENCE I was left with some questions, such as how it was possible that people with such a significant spiritual life and a clear and open Christian spirit could experience so many difficulties, even in our country. Some years earlier, I had addressed the issue of Ecumenism and came to the reflection that I have the opportunity to share with you now.

There are diverse Christian denominations: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Coptic, Anglican... but there is one Spirit that leads them: the Spirit of God alive that Jesus reveals to us. In the Gospels, we

find Jesus' desire for His followers to be united: "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" He could not be more explicit or wish more for the unity of His people. But I dare to ask: are not we Christians who follow Christ and His Gospel really one in Him? Then it is clear that the Spirit of Christ that unites us makes all of us brothers and we call God the Father.

THERE IS ONE CHRIST that make us brothers all Christians and it is Him, rather than us, who makes us one as He also is with the Father. Thus, what really makes sense is not distinguishing brothers separated and not separated but seeing a brother in someone who follows Christ through his denomination, the one he feels called to follow. Then, a Catholic, for example, sees and tells that Copt: "I love you, brother in the Lord, as you are, with your customs and your ways." What really matters is that, in different situations and places, we all search for Christ in men. The Lord is one, as is one the way, the truth and the life. And it is in this manner that we are called to follow Him. Do you remember that fragment from Paul to the Christians of Corinth? He says: "Each one of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollo,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?" (1 Corinthians 1: 10–13). We could say the same about ourselves, the followers of the different Christian denominations: are not we of the same Jesus of Nazareth, who guides us and accompanies us as a shepherd does his sheep? Does our Christian denomination not lead us to unity, as the Gospels do? Of course it does, because the Spirit that is in us and that is also one leads us to this will.

The Book of Revelation also tells us about seven Christian communities or churches. Each of them has its angel and its own

characteristics. Each of these communities is reprimanded for its errors and told the things that it can improve. In the text, Jesus addresses and tells them about the specific reward that He will give to each of these communities. But... they are never reproached for lack of mutual unity, although there are seven of them. In my view, it is the same now: although we are all one in Christ, we are grouped according to the diverse Christian denominations, each one as it is. However, the aim is to see a brother in those who follow Christ in their own denomination, different from mine.

And our love is not only aimed at Christian brothers (to whom Jesus said: “Even as I have loved you, that you also love one another”) but the whole of humanity; as we see in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which he looks after the poor man as if he were himself.

WE CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD are many, and the Christian denominations are diverse, but together we form one people, one body. As that fragment of Paul says, one part of the body cannot tell the other “as you are not like me you don’t form part of the body”, neither can the whole body be like one part (1 Corinthians 12: 16–26). This is the case with each Christian Church, which cannot tell the other that it does not form part of this mystic body of Christ because it is different. We will soon begin the week of prayer for our unity. It will be a golden opportunity to tell the Copt, the Protestant or the Orthodox Christian: “I pray and I care for you, brother,” as we say to someone from our own family. Thus, he will feel reciprocated and we will all live in truth.