

BLESSED JOSEMARIA: A WITNESS OF GOD'S LOVE AND TENDERNESS

Flavio Capucci

In this interview the Postulator of the cause of canonization of Opus Dei's Founder discusses the impact his forthcoming canonization will have in a troubled world.

Q: With John Paul II's recognition of a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Josemaría, will we see his canonization in 2002, the centenary of his birth?

Monsignor Capucci: I have a certain hesitation about saying yes. The recognition of a miracle does not mean that the date of canonization is automatically decided upon. There is a prior step: the convocation of a consistory by the Holy Father and this can sometimes be delayed.

In the consistory the Holy See decides which canonizations will take place and fixes their dates. So, I don't know if it will take place this year, but I have high hopes it may.

Q: The Church proposes her saints as models for Christian living. Which virtue, do you think, did Blessed Josemaría reflect especially?

Monsignor Capucci: All saints have one outstanding virtue: charity, love of God – the root of their Christian heroism. In Blessed Josemaría, charity had its own very striking dimension. He taught especially that all human activity, normal daily life, could be sanctified. And in that life the three theological virtues acquire a very human tone.

Thus, faith means security and confidence; hope daring and optimism; and

and charity human warmth and tenderness. Blessed Josemaría could not conceive of supernatural charity without affection. It was his friendship and loyalty which, through God's grace, created a family atmosphere.

His was a Christianity without rigidity, filled with affection, spontaneity, warmth and good humour.

Q: This is not the image usually given by those who criticize Opus Dei.

Monsignor Capucci: The truth is that what Blessed Josemaría is most remembered for is his spiritual paternity. He was very fatherly and very affectionate to everyone he met, and showed his love for everyone. It is only because of this spiritual paternity that I can explain the worldwide growth of devotion to him.

One sees in his eyes and smile (just look at the photographs of him!), something attractive, something that makes Christianity attractive. This also explains why to date I have collected documentation for more than 30 miraculous cures. It is something that, as postulator, I have seen for myself in very many countries.

Q: John Paul II has given the go-ahead for the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei in a very particular historical context, one in

which fear and uncertainty seem to reign following numerous terrorist attacks. For a believer nothing is accidental. What do you think?

Monsignor Capucci: These are times when our culture is suffused with fear; when, paradoxically, our relationship with God is almost suspended and when we seem to be afraid of God.

There is a fear of complicating our lives, of coming out of ourselves, of giving up certain habits. Blessed Josemaría made divine filiation the foundation of Opus Dei's spirituality. We relate to God as our very loving Father. Thus confidence and self-assurance are the most tangible characteristics of the spirit of, and formation given by, the Work. Perhaps this is a response to the contemporary crises we suffer.

Q: What does this recognition of Blessed Josemaría's holiness and his future canonization mean for Opus Dei in general and for each one of its members in particular?

Monsignor Capucci: As we celebrate the centenary of his birth, it is a call especially to fidelity: to God, the Church and vocation.

Q: Is Opus Dei now more of a 'work of God' than ever before?

Monsignor Capucci: In a word, yes; but, as I've just said, it is a call to fidelity, to apply his teachings and message to our own lives.

Q: The atmosphere in which the miracle has been recognized is very different from 1992, the year of his beatification. On that occasion

some dissenting articles were published. What has happened in the meantime?

Monsignor Capucci: I really don't know. It may be just the passage of time; it is all of 10 years now and much has been clarified in the intervening years.

Criticism stemmed primarily from the speed with which the beatification took place. At the time I used reply that this was the first cause opened and concluded under John Paul II's reform, and that in the future we would see many beatifications and canonizations completed in even less time. Events have proved me right for very many causes have been concluded in almost record times. Hence, Catholics know much more about what is going on and criticisms are now few and far between.

What is more, I think that truth has had its impact. People have come to realize that Blessed Josemaría cannot be seen as a symbol of a particular out-moded ideological stance. He was sometimes painted as the symbol of conservatism or as a representative of the Franco period in Spain.

Q: And was this not so?

Monsignor Capucci: Not at all. Blessed Josemaría was, above all, a man of God and of the Church. He founded Opus Dei to serve the Church and all men and women. I think that this is now widely appreciated. For me, who am Italian, and who knew him since I was 18, to say that he was a conservative or a Franco sympathizer makes absolutely no sense.