

I think that is a stereotype that is a bit too easily spread about. What characterizes young people is a big, generous heart full of ambitious projects, and that has not changed in the young men and women of our time.

At the same time, and this will always be the case, every Christian without exception needs to receive formation and to grow in one's relationship with God. This is what happens with young people. Look at the World Youth Days: two million young people who walk for kilometres under a blazing sun, facing tiredness, often thirsty, sleeping on the ground, and yet without a lament or a complaint, smiling.

All that for what? To listen to a noble elderly man? No, I would say rather that they came to meet the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Pope. John Paul II shows them the demanding way of the faith. He gives witness to them of Jesus' love for them in the hope brought to us by the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us, to use the words of Saint John that were the theme of those days.

No one can deny the thousands of confessions, innumerable conversions and many new vocations. Those who try to manipulate young people are still open-mouthed about it. I insist that young people are eager to follow the message of the Church. This is the time of generous commitment and personal effort, but also of the splendid experience of God's loving mercy.

## Rome February 14, 2001

*"Christian joy stems from pardon—not sinlessness," interview published by the Agency Zenit.*

*Opus Dei's prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarría, has just published a book, "Itinerarios de vida cristiana" ("Planeta+Testimonio"). In it, he offers reflections on who Christians are and what they are called to do. He also addresses themes relevant to both the Church and the contemporary world, including the family crisis, responsible parenthood, and the meaning and value of the human body. Echevarría (Madrid, 1932) is the second successor to Blessed Josemaría Escrivá to head the personal Prelature, founded on October 2, 1928. According to the latest Anuario Pontificio, some 84,000 people form part of Opus Dei (Latin for "Work of God"). In the following interview the Prelate talks about what it means to be a Christian in "an environment where the main concern is one's good image, success and power... where people get depressed over a failure or a financial setback, even by wrinkles on their face."*

*How do you size up our age?*

I think it's obvious that we're living in complex times, even paradoxical ones. Alongside undeniable shadows we find sources of light. It would be easy to list examples of human progress and decline, of conquests and defeats. But, beyond all this, we can't forget that we're living in the fullness of time. Now is the

moment, which has already lasted two thousand years, of true and definitive novelty: the moment when God becomes man in Jesus Christ, opening up to us the possibility of becoming God's children. We can never be sufficiently grateful for this treasure, which enables us to confront every situation with human and supernatural optimism. Any other perspective on our times would be incomplete, showing us only the surface of what is happening in history, both our personal history and that of the world's.

*But don't you think that the conduct of those committed to living Christianity clashes with much of the contemporary world?*

Absolutely, but this clash is nothing new. At Jesus' presentation in the temple, Simeon forewarned Joseph and Mary that the child would be a sign of contradiction. When the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, they overcame their fears to proclaim Christ. But the "level-headed" claimed they were drunk, and they were thrown into jail. We know eventually how they ended up, but they were always happy. So has it been throughout the centuries. The newness of the Christian message will always clash, a clash that can and ought to be an awakening that brings forth love, that makes man more human, freeing him and opening up new horizons.

*What is your opinion of the contemporary concept of love?*

In today's society, it seems to me, the trend is to divorce love from

commitment, from the mutual faithfulness of those who love each other, which is so essential to the very concept of love. When that happens, everything is tainted with selfishness and the search for self-fulfillment. What mother would stop loving her child because her neighbor's is more winning? That's why legal sanctions for broken marriages are a great tragedy. In contrast, Christ's demand—"what God has united let no man put asunder"—is the source and guarantee of freedom and true love.

*In your book you refer to those who criticise the father's role in the family. What lies at the root of this negative criticism?*

The problem starts when children are seen mainly as contributing to their parents' self-fulfillment. Then the father can come across as some kind of ogre. In contrast, Jesus Christ has revealed to us the tenderness of God's fatherhood and the freedom God the Father grants us by adopting us as his sons and daughters in Christ Jesus.

*Many couples complain that conditions today don't allow them to have as many children as they'd like.*

There's no doubt that many pressures exist (poverty, unemployment, housing costs, to name a few) that might lead couples justifiably to choose natural methods of family planning. Unfortunately, even in the absence of pressures, there are those who question the intrinsic value of paternity and maternity. Such an attitude views reproduction, not as some-

thing good and desirable in itself, but as merely one of many competing options. While such people acknowledge that transmitting life is a great good, the prospect of having more children and educating them is seen as something complicated and risky. Then parental satisfactions are weighed against the required sacrifices, and often the balance reached is that more children just aren't worth while. Circumstances are blamed, but what people have forgotten is the value of life, the meaning of love, and the beauty of motherhood and fatherhood.

*Your book concludes with a chapter on "the essence of joy." But some might ask how one can be joyful in a world filled, as is ours, with suffering and injustice.*

In its liturgy, the Church sings joyfully of the mystery of Christ's cross. Suffering doesn't eliminate joy if one is united to Christ's self-giving for our salvation. Joy withers when one gives in to the selfishness of sin, when one overlooks love for God and love for neighbor, when one fails to repent. Those swayed by an environment where the main concern is one's good image, success and power, easily get depressed over a failure or a financial setback, even by wrinkles on their face. For a Christian, joy doesn't depend on a presumed sinlessness, which doesn't exist. Rather it comes from asking for pardon, from repenting. It's the joy of the prodigal son. I'm more and more convinced that Blessed Josemaria Escriva was right when he called the sacrament of Penance "the sacrament of joy."

## Madrid April 9, 2001

*Radio interview on the network COPE on the occasion of the publication of the book Itinerarios de Vida Cristiana.*

*There is no better mirror of our faith that the life of men and women who have been changed by encountering Jesus Christ, living and present in his Church. That's why on our program we try to present the paths of these person's lives, paths that provide guidance for us and help each of us to follow our own path in life. Itinerarios de Vida Cristiana is the title of a recent book by Bishop Javier Echevarría, Opus Dei's Prelate (part of the collection "Planeta Testimonio"). Bishop Echevarría, who just ordained 24 members of Opus Dei to the priesthood here in Madrid, has graciously accepted our invitation to appear on this show and to share with us some of the pathways sketched out in his book. Good afternoon, Bishop Echevarría, and many thanks for being with us.*

Good afternoon to you. I'm the one who is grateful. I ask you and your audience to pray for me, as I do with all my heart for them.

*I imagine you are happy to be back in your native Madrid, especially on such a joyous occasion as the ordination of 24 members of the Opus Dei Prelature. Here's my first question: What is the significance of the fact that the Work continues being so fruitful in finding men who say Yes to God's call as priests?*