

vanced; something new is contributed to the community of which the university is a part.

University work thus will offer a real service to the truth; it will help build a living community, one that will lead to renewal and be a catalyst of originality. And it will help bring about a more noble society, with customs that are more worthy of human dignity, more in accord with the Truth.

In the pontifical universities, university work is also a direct service to the Church's mission and unity, as the Pope noted in his Mass inaugura-

ting the past academic year. The pontifical universities, John Paul II said, "are specially called to put themselves, in a constantly renewed way, at the service of the unity of the Church. This unity, open by its very nature to the Catholic truth, finds here in Rome the ideal environment for its study and service."¹ May Mary our Mother, Seat of divine Wisdom, obtain for us from heaven the grace of knowing how to make our university life conform to these ideals of deepening in the truth and in the search for unity, which can help so many souls to find the full Truth, the Word of God Himself.

Articles and Interviews

Ecclesia Agency (Lisbon) July 29, 2003

*Complete text of the interview
granted to the Ecclesia Agency*

*You lived alongside the founder of
Opus Dei for 25 years. When did you begin
to call him a saint?*

I always considered him a saint. In 1950 something I heard him say was deeply engraved on my memory. Later I came to see that it expressed the norm for his entire life. He spoke

of himself as a sinner who loved Jesus Christ madly. A brief prayer that he sincerely repeated to our Lord till the end of his life was: "Lord, let yourself be seen through my misery." The saints are always deeply convinced of their little worth; the only thing that really matters to them is to identify themselves with Jesus and to make him known.

*What virtues make St. Josemaría a
saint for our times?*

I see him as being always contemporary, because he possessed the newness of the Gospel. His life and message have a perennial character, and aren't tied to any passing fads or

1. John Paul II, Homily at the Mass inaugurating the academic year of the ecclesiastical universities, October 25, 2002.

prevailing interests. He strove to live the Gospel teachings as fully as possible and to help everyone to come to know them. His message is not an adaptation to modernity, but rather the transmission of the newness of the Gospel, which is always attractive and, at the same time, a sign of contradiction. He was convinced, as he said in one of his books, that the Christian faith is totally opposed to conformity (cf. *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 42). The timeliness of St. Josemaría, like that of all the saints, is rooted in his consistency with the Gospel. The saints are not heralds of themselves, but of Christ, although their witness may provoke, along with acceptance by many, opposition by others.

I am convinced that St. Josemaría was, and will continue to be, an instrument used by our Lord to open the ears of many people to God's call to identify themselves with Him, each in one's own place in the world. This great priest made it clear that the Master's call is not directed only to a few specialists or experts in religious matters, but that it has been addressed for the past twenty centuries to everyone. And for all who discover this light, it brings each day a great and attractive newness that illumines their life with a new clarity.

Does the celebration of the centennial of the birth of the founder and his canonization mark, in some way, a change in Opus Dei's relationship with the Church and society, now that it is becoming better known?

I don't think that it marks any real change. It's simply that the worldwide diffusion of information

in the media about the centennial and the canonization has helped millions of people to come to know more about Opus Dei. There are continual requests from all over the world asking for more information about St. Josemaría and his teachings.

Erecting Opus Dei as a Prelature has given it a special character, at least a unique one. Could this fact generate misunderstanding within the Church itself?

The figure of the personal prelate, foreseen by the Second Vatican Council and included in the Code of Canon Law, does not give Opus Dei any special character, precisely because it is a type of institution foreseen by the common law of the Church. There is no reason why it should give rise to misunderstandings within the Church. What is more, this figure, since it expresses very well the nature and place of Opus Dei in the Church, facilitates and strengthens relationships of communion within the Church.

Does the Prelature, like the dioceses, have a "vocations office" or "vocations director"? What exactly does this involve?

The Prelature of Opus Dei does not have a specific "vocations office" as such. In fact, all of its activity in spreading the vocation to sanctity and Christian formation leads to helping each person discover his or her personal vocation in the Church. Indeed, as a fruit of Opus Dei's apostolic work, besides those who become incorporated in the prelate and many others who discover the deep meaning of their baptismal vocation, many

vocations arise for the diocesan seminaries and for religious congregations. This was foreseen by St. Josemaría in 1935, as he put down in writing.

Spirituality and solidarity: do these words express similar ideas? To what extent do they imply competition?

Spirituality and solidarity are two different concepts. But naturally a dedication to initiatives of solidarity might very well stem from a particular spirituality, or from a specific ideology or social or political conviction, etc.

I would add that, for a Christian, solidarity is a necessary consequence of his faith, which, as St. Paul writes, acts through charity. In other words, one's faith impresses a particular identity on the natural solidarity in the face of diverse human needs: one that is created by love, the charity that is Jesus' new commandment. Thus, for example, it would make no sense for a Christian to view as an initiative of solidarity an economic assistance program that has as one of its conditions the restricting of births. It is very painful to see the dignity of peoples attacked in this way. Likewise, it is sad to see people who say they abhor terrorism giving free rein to the arms traffic with third world countries.

Looking at the world and contemporary society, do you think the family is in crisis?

The family enters into crisis when the meaning of matrimonial fidelity and true love for children is lost. Given this thermometer, it isn't hard to see problems in the world

around us. It is not the family as such that is in crisis, but the social and family philosophies of many legislators and people in government, with their ideological presuppositions and the grave consequences these occasion in broad sectors of Western society. A recuperation—in prevailing ideas, in law and in real life—of the dignity of the family based on indissoluble marriage is the indispensable condition, even though it might seem difficult to achieve, for overcoming many other crises today, including juvenile delinquency, drugs, etc.

Is it possible to speak of different conceptions of the family?

Undoubtedly, there are different conceptions of the family; one need only think of the differences between Islamic and Christian views.

But often speaking of different conceptions of the family is an excuse to present as legally correct failures in family life or deviations in some sectors of society. All these people merit the respect that human dignity demands and, from Christians, affection and service. But precisely for this reason, we tell them sincerely what we see as for the good of society and also for their own good, without considering ourselves superior to anyone.

How can one combat certain problems that are growing in contemporary society which also affect the Church, such as pedophilia?

All the problems in our society affect the Church, because Christians feel the duty of bringing Christ's light to wherever darkness is present, and

because we are not exempt from sin. But to combat evil, our Lord has given us certain weapons: prayer and the sacraments, especially penance and the Eucharist. Today, the same as yesterday and tomorrow, Catholics have to feel the responsibility of spreading knowledge of the need to go to the sacrament of forgiveness, which obtains God's grace and fortifies us against the tugging of the passions. The solution to the assaults of evil is not found in psychological theories or psychiatric remedies, but in the help of God's mercy, which is conferred especially in the sacraments. Psychiatry can be, at times, a necessary help for personal equilibrium, but it does not accomplish a cleansing of moral evil in the soul.

Should God, or at least a clear reference to Christianity, have a place in the European constitution? What is the meaning of attempts to exclude it?

The attempts to exclude any reference to Europe's Christian tradition offers a sad picture of the political panorama in Europe. Aside from constituting an evident historical inconsistency, the exclusion of God's name and of Christianity will go down in history as an absurd example of intolerant secularism and culpable historical ignorance.

Are you in favor of "fortress Europe," or do you view the phenomenon of immigration as a natural sign of globalization?

The problems presented by immigration are complex and quite serious. Seeing what is happening, there comes to mind at times the memory

of what St. Augustine said on contemplating the fall of Hippo: it is not an old world that is ending, but a new one that is beginning. I don't know where history is leading us, but the present panorama is calling for a new vision for confronting international problems. And this is a serious challenge for the Church as well. I view it with optimism, and think that the Christian minorities who have not allowed themselves to be overcome by consumerism and hedonism—guided by the magisterium and example of the Holy Father John Paul II—are precisely the ones who will be able to offer solutions in conformity with human dignity.

What path can you point out as leading to dialogue between the West and Islam in order to bring about an end to the threat of terrorism?

I see this path as the effort to make known, every day with greater strength, the Christian vision of life, that is to say, the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Utopia? Naivete? Perhaps for many it is, although I am convinced that Christ brought the Truth to this world and that the effort to help as many people as possible come to know this Truth is of immense importance.

Has this pontificate surpassed all expectations, or, in your opinion, can we expect still further surprises?

If one considers things from a merely human point of view, one might fail to expect any more surprises or novelties. But, in reality, this consideration would fall short because our faith assures us that the mission of the successor of St. Peter is very especially