

mosphere of trust, of disinterested affection, of joy. In contrast to pessimism, cheerfulness is a good counselor; it knows how to sidestep the difficulties, making them more bearable. We have to discover reasons to be joyful, and savor them within the family. The struggle against selfishness is also important, as selfishness stunts one's capacity for love, for forgiveness, for understanding, for service, all qualities that enrich one's personality.

Home and profession are two areas in which many women struggle daily. How can one attain equilibrium and establish priorities here?

The equilibrium between dedication to one's family and to work outside the home is not a problem exclusive to women. The family should be a shared responsibility, distributing tasks equally between wife and husband. A necessary condition for harmony in the family is the mutual assistance between the spouses, sharing in the desire to raise their children well, transmitting to them their own faith through their word and example.

A husband and wife should be united in confronting obstacles. The two of them should decide together how to distribute the responsibilities in each situation, mutually supporting each other, not as two competitors, but as joint sharers in a holy task.

How can we take advantage of the Jubilee year?

I can answer you in one word: conversion. The Jubilee commemo-

rates the two thousandth anniversary of Christ's birth. And when it's a question of those we love, we don't remember them only on their birthday: they are in our hearts everyday. Conversion means opening wide the doors of our heart to Jesus, so that he can remove whatever is incompatible with our Christian vocation.

And so that the Holy Year does not remain merely a matter of nice feelings, we have to make use of the sacrament of confession. We need to undergo a conversion, with the resolution to begin a new life: a life that demands a new struggle against whatever separates us from Jesus.

Catalunya Cristiana (Barcelona) May 18, 2000

Interview granted to Miriam Díez i Bosch, published in the magazine Catalunya Cristiana, Barcelona, Spain

Opus Dei was born in Spain. How would you describe "the Work" today in its birthplace?

Opus Dei in today's Spain is a leaven of Christian life. Thanks to God's help, not through any merits of the prelatore's faithful, hundreds of thousands of persons during the 72 years since its founding have encountered Jesus Christ again or for the first

time in their work or through friendship with a woman or man belonging to Opus Dei.

At the same time the Work there is just getting under way. There is a lot of "demand," so to speak. Many people are attracted by the ideal of following Jesus Christ in their everyday life.

What is the role of the Torreciudad Shrine?

The Torreciudad Shrine, about to mark its 25th anniversary in July, has drawn millions of men and women from all over the world. They have come to pray to our Lady, to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, to renew their Christian life. That's the purpose of the shrine: to foster, through Holy Mary, a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Many Spaniards as well as people from other countries have a lot of affection for Torreciudad. They treasure it as a major milestone in their lives.

Is the number of young men preparing for the priesthood growing, shrinking or about the same?

In not a few countries, the Church is witnessing a growth in priests and seminarians. This news should give rise to joy and thankfulness to the Most Holy Trinity. The data show that following Jesus Christ with a radical dedication, putting oneself completely at his service, is a lifelong ambition attractive to young men from different backgrounds and professions. Christ's call is always up-to-date.

With respect to Opus Dei, just the other day I conferred priestly ordination on some of the prelate's faithful; in May and July I will also ordain others. Since becoming a bishop in 1995, I have ordained more than 200 members for the Opus Dei prelate. Yet, considering the needs of the world, I see these as too few. I mention these numbers not out of pride, but to thank our Lord, while continuing to pray for the priests and seminarians throughout the world's dioceses.

Are you proud of belonging to the world's only personal prelate?

My feeling consists of continual thanks to heaven. Not a day goes by without praising God more and more for his providence, for the family that welcomed me to the world, for having called me to Opus Dei, a part of the People of God. Later on he called me to the priesthood and to live alongside a saint, Blessed Josemaria Escriva. I'm also thankful for many other reasons that I won't go into here.

On the other hand, I hope that, with time and in keeping with Vatican II, other personal prelatures will be set up. Whether national or international, such entities would address pastoral needs experienced in the Church today or in the future.

What do you mean when you say that woman holds the key role in the family?

In my view her role is absolutely indispensable. As the radical cell of society, the family represents a joint project dependent on the respective

contributions of husband, wife and children. Particularly in today's world, the father's role and responsibility cannot be emphasized too much. But if the father holds an essential role, this is also true of the mother.

To deny the mother's irreplaceable role is equivalent to turning one's back on reality. I'm not talking here of her aptitude for housekeeping and home-making, but rather of a series of moral qualities that a woman possesses. It's hard to summarize these in a few words, without the risk of oversimplifying them and thus falling short. Mothers are gifted with a wonderful capacity to express love, to make others happy, loving each person as he or she is, unconditionally and disinterestedly. In my view the family is based and built on feminine wisdom and intuition.

How would you go about bringing Christianity to civil and secular structures in order to solve problems of social justice?

To bring the Gospel's light to society, no one formula or program exists. Moreover, social justice cannot be reduced to assisting the needy or to aiding certain countries or groups of people. Justice encompasses all human relationships.

That's why "bringing Christianity to secular structures," as you put it, will always be a fundamental mission of lay people, of men and women living their faith consistently in all walks of life: entrepreneurs and factory hands, politicians, teachers, bureaucrats, lawyers... No one is exempt from this obligation.

Against this background, one can appreciate the great importance of a deep, mature and realistic Christian formation. A solid professional, spiritual and ethical formation is the key to discovering thousands of ways to live justice in one's work and in all one's dealings with one's neighbor. As a bishop, I'm deeply committed to meeting this pastoral challenge.

What are the Work's goals in this Jubilee year?

We are stressing the need for a personal conversion to Jesus Christ, convinced that his "commandments" are proofs of his love. We have to be consistent with our faith and make amends for what we don't do well. If we were already saints, we would have already departed from this world!

Do you have in mind an explicit and direct way to echo the Good News?

We are God's children; we cannot hide our Christian identity, what we truly are. Christianity dignifies the person. We're called to bring its message and challenge to every corner of life. We have to spread the Good News without inhibitions, never hiding the reality that we're God's children. The faith is to be lived minute by minute. How could one be a good father or mother and then be dishonest at the office?

At what stage is the canonization process of Blessed Josemaria Escriva?

For canonization to take place, there must be a demonstrated miracle, worked through the Blessed's intercession after his beatification.

Since May 17, 1992, when the priest Josemaria Escriva was declared Blessed, documentation has been gathered on several cures that defy scientific explanation.

The investigations into these cases are at various stages; some have been concluded and presented to the

Holy See. The ecclesiastical authorities analyze the documentation rigorously and thoroughly. In the meantime, I'm very happy to see how devotion to Blessed Josemaria is spreading to new nations and environments. I have no doubt that his canonization will come at the best possible moment.