

nications can carry out. In the academic year 1940-1941, at the request of a friend and with the encouragement of the bishop of Madrid, he gave classes in ethics in what later became the official school of journalism. He always insisted that the children of God should be present with their professionalism, their Christian identity, and their love for the truth in the places where public opinion is formed. "It is difficult," this holy priest reminded us, "for people really to live together harmoniously when there is no real information. And real information does not fear the truth and does not allow itself to be led away by motives of intrigue, false prestige or economic advantage."⁷

This entails, in the academic setting, harmonizing the gift of faith with the daily effort to deepen one's knowledge of the communications field. Thus we will help "to make the truth lovable," as our first Chancellor, Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, advised in the title of a book that collected some of his addresses at this university. How much gratitude we owe to this bishop, so exemplary in his service to the Church and to souls! Following his example, let us entrust these resolutions to our Lord and to Holy Mary, Seat of Wisdom.

Kenya

April 23, 2008

*Interview in The Standard,
on the occasion of the official
recognition of the University of
Strathmore by the Kenyan
Government*

You lived for many years alongside St. Josemaría Escrivá who was the inspiration of Strathmore. Can you tell us a little about his vision of Strathmore?

When St. Josemaría Escrivá accepted, back in 1957, the invitation of Archbishop Gastone Mojaisky Perelli, then Apostolic Delegate resident in Mombasa, to start a university in Nairobi, he was really responding to the universal calling that God had given Opus Dei.

The request of Archbishop Gastone Mojaisky came at an historic moment for Africa and for Kenya in particular. Full independence was only five years away, and the country had a multi-ethnic transitional government in place. St. Josemaría was open to founding a university provided that the government gave a guarantee concerning its independence and autonomy. However, it soon became clear that the project of establishing a university level institution had to be modified. It was the founder himself who suggested starting instead with an institute of higher learning and a students' residence.

7. St. Josemaría, *Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá*, no. 86.

And so it was that Strathmore College began as a new type of special two-year school to serve as a bridge between secondary education and the university.

His idea was that the College and, later, the university should be run by laypeople, good professionals in the field of education, and must adhere to four general guidelines: it would be interracial; it would be open to people of all religions; it would not be classified as a mission school; and students had to pay at least a token amount, in order to make them see the school as something that belonged to them.

The colonial authorities were sceptical about the prospects of a college open to students of every race, tribe, and religion. It was the first such experiment in East Africa. From the outset, nevertheless, it admitted Africans, Europeans and Indians; adherents of all religions, and members of different tribes.

What inspires Opus Dei's corporate works such as Strathmore University?

Initiatives such as Strathmore University should not only pursue the highest level of academic excellence, but also aim to provide an integral formation, one that focuses also on the human, moral and spiritual facets of every person.

This universal message of Opus Dei is put into practice in the lives of

all who are associated in one way or another with the academic community: professors, students and administrative personnel.

What is your vision of the University?

To paraphrase my predecessor, the late Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the university should be a place of intense work, where academic developments, technical advances, and new ideas decisively influence the configuration of human society. This effort results in true progress when it respects and loves the nature and dignity of the human person, called to live in unity with all men and women and to journey toward God.

As the Chancellor, what do you expect of students and staff of the University?

There should be a realization in the University of the need to pass on not only technical knowledge but also the joy of being children of God, of living for God. And in the case of Christians, we live for God not only on Sundays when we go to Church, but also in the family and at work.

At the same time, I urge everybody at the University to contribute to making it a true family in which we all love one another: the lecturers, the administrative and support staff and the students: we must live for each other.

What advice would you give to staff and students regarding their involvement in the country's affairs and the contributions they can make personally?

People in universities usually appreciate and have a lot of enthusiasm for their work. I would invite them to foster an even greater sense of responsibility in their tasks. The country and the world are in need of the example of your research and your teaching, which will encourage many others to undertake the effort to bring the truth to light, thus contributing to solve the great problems of our society and our times.

Please tell us something about your family and childhood.

I was born in Madrid on June 14, 1932, the youngest of eight children. My father was from the Basque region of Spain. He was an industrial engineer and also a professor at the School of Engineering. From him I got my interest in university education.

How and when did you learn about Opus Dei?

I was introduced to members of Opus Dei at a student residence on the Calle Diego de Leon in Madrid in 1948. A magazine article about Opus Dei had sparked great interest among the students, and many of us began meeting at the student residence to learn more about its reality and significance. I joined Opus Dei on September 8, 1948.

When were you ordained priest and where have you served since ordination?

I was ordained a priest in August 1955. I worked in close collaboration with St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer; as his personal secretary, from 1953 until his death in 1975.

When Álvaro del Portillo succeeded Josemaría Escrivá as head of Opus Dei in 1975, I was named General Secretary, a position which until that time had been held by Msgr. del Portillo.

I was elected and appointed Prelate of Opus Dei by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on April 20, 1994. I was ordained Bishop in St. Peter's Basilica on January 6, 1995.