give us light in the coming months so that we too may be instruments of unity wherever we are, and specifically in the life of the university.

Back to Contents

Articles and Interviews

Interview in the Vecernji Newspaper, Croatia (October 2, 2020)

You recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of your ordination to the priesthood. Can you recall the beginnings of your journey as a priest?

I remember how moved I was to be able to celebrate Holy Mass every day. Since then, I have never ceased asking our Lord that I never get used to that experience, even though it is no longer something new. It was St. Josemaría who accepted my call to the priesthood, so I often have recourse to him to pray for my priestly ministry and for the happiness and fruitfulness of all the priests in the world.

How would you briefly define the Opus Dei that you lead today?

Opus Dei is an institution of the Church that seeks to sow Christ's peace and joy in the middle of the world. With our mistakes and successes, we seek to bring Christ to family, professional and social environments. The Work would like to be for many people a "great catechesis," in union with that carried out by parishes and so many other institutions in the Church.

Critics of Opus Dei have described it as mysterious and powerful....

It seems to me that these accusations are concerns of other times. Today anyone can have access to all the information they need, if they are really interested in the reality of Opus Dei and not in certain novels of intrigue that have forged a cliché.

Who are the greatest enemies of Opus Dei today?

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The main enemy is not external, but internal. I am referring to the danger of "worldliness," because the faithful of Opus Dei live immersed in the realities of the world, a world that is largely de-Christianized, and we are not immune to a possible loss of spiritual vigor. I do not view those who in one way or another oppose Opus Dei externally as enemies. Surely in many cases they are poorly informed people who do not understand the spirit that animates Opus Dei, or people who help us to be better with their criticisms, when they are well-founded.

And, in spite of this, Opus Dei continues to attract many men and women.

Yes, but naturally I would like many more people to be willing to bring Christ's Church to all the environments of Croatia and the world, not only through Opus Dei but also through so many other evangelizing groups that flourish in the Church.

How is Opus Dei responding to the current crisis of a lack of interest in and abandonment of the faith?

A key means is the spiritual accompaniment and guidance of souls, one by one, being good friends, with great respect for everyone's freedom. If we see society as only an undifferentiated mass of people, perhaps we have little Christian vision of things. Each person is loved by God and deserves all the respect and attention of the Church, because Christ died for each one. A major concern is to help people appreciate the treasure of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance.

How do you view the crisis caused by the coronavirus?

I see it as a call to live for others, in a spirit of human solidarity and Christian charity. The pandemic, as the Pope recently said, reminds us that no one is saved alone, that we depend on each other and that we all have a part to play in the common work of caring for the world.

The Prelature you direct answers directly to the Holy Father. How do you see the role of Pope Francis in today's world?

In reality, not only the faithful of Opus Dei, but every Catholic depends directly on the Pope, even if they are also dependent on other entities in the Church. On the other hand, our dependence on the Pope, like that of so

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many other circumscriptions in the Church, is mediated by the Congregation for Bishops and by other organisms of the Holy See.

As for the role of the Pope, returning to what I said before, I think that precisely in this world in which the pandemic forces us to question many things, his paternal presence is more necessary than ever. For example, many people have told me of the impact made on them by the image of an empty St. Peter's Square and the Pope comforting and blessing everyone as the Vicar of Christ.

Pope Francis has critics in the Church itself. Can believers criticize the Pope?

History teaches us that all pontificates have experienced moments of strong criticism, for one reason or another. As for your question about the legitimacy of criticism, I would say, with our founder, St. Josemaría, that the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, should always be loved and not criticized, whoever he may be.

You are preparing for Opus Dei's centennial, which will be celebrated from October 2, 2028 to February 14, 2030. Why exactly has this period been chosen?

Yes, we are preparing ourselves with the aim of reflecting on how to improve Opus Dei's service to the Church and society in the next hundred years.

God raised up Opus Dei on October 2, 1928, but the Work was not complete until February 14, 1930, when St. Josemaría saw clearly that God was asking him that there should also be women. That is why the centenary has, so to speak, a double date.

Do you know much about the life of Catholics in Croatia?

In Opus Dei there is a certain tradition of spiritual closeness with Croatian Catholics. The first person to join Opus Dei outside Spain was a Croatian, Vladimiro Vince, who was later ordained a priest and died in a plane crash in 1968. In more recent times, my predecessors at the head of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo and Bishop Javier Echevarría, and now myself, have had regular contact with the bishops of Croatia on the occasion of their visits to Rome. Some of them, moreover, have sent priests and seminarians to study at the University of the Holy Cross, which Opus Dei directs in Rome, and this is another factor that helps me to feel in close communion

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

with Croatia. Moreover, I read with great enthusiasm the letters that members and friends of Opus Dei in your country write to me. And I have been to Croatia on several occasions: the previous ones, with Bishop Javier Echevarría.

The apostolic work of Opus Dei is associated with the arrival of Msgr. Jorge Ramos 18 years ago, but now he is leaving Croatia. He was, and still is, one of the most popular confessors, and people are really sad to see him go. Why have you decided to transfer him to a new position of service in Brazil, and do you know who will replace Msgr. Ramos in Croatia?

The Work has been in Croatia 18 years now and has come of age. And we see now the fulfillment of what our Founder so often said about the development of the apostolate: to work in the country and from the country, that is to say, in our case, in Croatia and from Croatia. The fact that Father Jorge is now coming to the aid of Brazil shows that Croatia is a mature region that feels challenged by the universality of the Work's apostolate.

As you may know, the Opus Dei circumscriptions of Croatia and Slovenia have recently been united. This has also made it possible to provide this assistance to the circumscription of Brazil. In the new single region of Croatia and Slovenia, the faithful of the Prelature of both countries will collaborate so that all apostolic initiatives will be attended to as well as possible, so that they will not suffer, or will suffer only minimally, from changes in pastoral assignments, as with Father Jorge.

In August, you visited Croatia, among other places. What was the purpose of your visit and your message to the people you saw in Zagreb?

This was one of my first pastoral trips since the beginning of the pandemic. The sanitary conditions currently in force are less restrictive than a year ago, although there are still important limitations for gatherings of people. In fact, on this trip I only had a few meetings with the faithful of the Prelature. May God grant that I will soon be able to meet with all the cooperators and friends.

The main purpose of my trip was to be with the people of the Prelature. I did not go to Croatia to convey a special message, but to accompany them, although naturally I did share some things that I carry in my heart. I spoke to

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

them of love for the Church and the Pope, of union with the bishops, of perseverance in the life of faith, of the apostolic mission proper to all Christians and, in this context, of the value of friendship, and of so many things that came up in family conversations.

Finally, what message do you want to convey to the members of Opus Dei in Croatia, and also to other believers and priests?

I would encourage everyone to be very grateful to God for the gift of faith and to bear witness, at work and in daily life, to the joy of having encountered Christ.

Back to Contents

Interview in the Avvenire Newspaper, Italy (December 13, 2020)

Monsignor Ocáriz, the spirituality of Opus Dei consists in discovering – and helping others to discover – the divine paths on earth*, as St. Josemaría Escrivá used to say. In today's society, where do these paths lead us?*

All paths, the path of the earth, are divine to the extent that we discover them as paths that lead us to God. If we contemplate this world with the eyes of those who know they are children of a Father who loves us, who has put us here to love him and to love others, to sow peace and joy, then ordinary life takes on a completely different hue. Our existence becomes an adventure of love; we can find God in the midst of the most ordinary things.

In the Gospel there are many references to these "paths." I am thinking of the one leading from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Good Samaritan discovered God in the poor man lying by the roadside. We can all discover our Lord in the faces of others, in family and social duties, in the fulfillment of the most ordinary tasks, if we do them with love.

In your book In the Light of the Gospel *you share with readers your personal notes for prayer, collected since 1977. Why did you decide to publish these?*

I accepted the publisher's request to give some of these notes a more "systematic" format, hoping that, with God's help, they would encourage read-

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