

Il Messaggero, Rome October 2, 1998

"The 70th anniversary of Opus Dei: Everyone is called to Holiness," an article published in the newspaper "Il Messaggero," of Rome on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei.

October 2 marks the seventieth anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei. While seventy years are perhaps too few for even a provisional evaluation of Opus Dei, it is more than enough time to make an examination of conscience in God's presence. "Thank you for the help you have given me, forgive my weakness, help me more," Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the first successor of Blessed Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei, used to pray on anniversaries such as this one. Today I would like to make that prayer my own.

What perspectives are opening up right now for the Prelature of Opus Dei? They are the same as the ones Blessed Josemaría saw on October 2, 1928. Work is man's perpetual task and the source of his dignity on earth. It will always be necessary therefore to stress that work is, at the same time, the place where men and women can encounter Christ every day, that in it they find the very material for their sanctity.

I would like to quote here from a letter Blessed Josemaría wrote back

in 1932. There he describes Opus Dei in its essential nucleus: "By raising up his Work in these times, God has wanted that the truth that everyone has the duty to reach holiness, and that the majority of Christians should sanctify themselves in the world, through their ordinary work, would never again be unknown or forgotten. Therefore, as long as there are men on earth, the Work will exist. There will always be people of every profession and occupation seeking holiness in their state, precisely in their profession or occupation, by being contemplative souls in the middle of the world."

We do not sanctify ourselves *in spite of the world but in the world*. Blessed Josemaría wrote on another occasion: "God is calling you to serve him *in and from* the ordinary, material, secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theater, in the army barracks, in the university, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home, in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it."

No Christian should forget that the path of sanctity passes through the Cross of Christ. The struggle to identify ourselves with Christ in ordinary work is not confined to one's intentions. It entails fatigue, courage in the face of obstacles, dedication, a spirit of service, proven loyalty, freedom and personal responsibility.

Therefore ask our Lord to teach all men to love sacrifice. Next to the Cross we will discover that we are beloved children of God and we will experience Mary's maternal protection.

Il Tempo, Rome October 15, 1998

"Twenty Years of the Pontificate of John Paul II Have Changed the History of the World," an article published in the newspaper "Il Tempo" of Rome on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the election of Pope John Paul II.

Among many stories about Pope John Paul II, one in particular comes to mind. I was told once that the Pope, at the end of a long day of hard work, received someone in his apartment. John Paul II's tiredness was apparent as he slowly walked over to greet the person in question. After greeting the Holy Father and kissing his hand, he said to him with filial affection: "Your Holiness, you are very tired." John Paul II answered: "I have no right not to be tired at this hour of the day. Otherwise it would be a sign that I hadn't fulfilled my duties."

I think these words tell us a great deal about the Pope. For him, the re-

sponsibility God has entrusted to him comes above any other consideration. His health, his time, his entire life belong to God, and out of love for God, to all mankind, whom he is called to serve.

At times people have asked the Pope: What is your personal prayer like? What do you tell God in the intimacy of your heart? John Paul II once answered: "The Pope's prayer . . . has an added dimension. *In his concern for all the Churches* every day the Pontiff must open his prayer, his thought, his heart to the entire world. Thus a kind of *geography of the Pope's prayer* is sketched out. It is a geography of communities, churches, societies, and also of the problems that trouble the world today." (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 23).

A pilgrimage of prayer. Praying for the problems of all men and women. "Trips" that John Paul II takes "in his thoughts and in his heart," to fulfill his mission as Pontiff, as a bridge between God and man. Such is the prayer of the Pope, and this explains why those who hear his words realize that his voice is not the tiresome public clamor that sometimes benumbs and bewilders us.

It is not hard to see that the Holy Father speaks with authority, with an authority that comes directly from Jesus, from the One who is the Word, from the Gospel that will never pass away even though heaven and earth should pass away (cf *Mt 5:18*). For the whole Church transmits the message of Jesus Christ.