

Jesus is the way for our encounter with God and with our brethren. May Blessed Josemaría help us to better know and travel this way. Today we entrust the Pope's call for a new evangelization to his interces-

sion. And we ask Mary most holy, Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians, to guide us on the path of that *strengthening of faith and of Christian witness*, which is "the primary objective of the Jubilee."¹⁹ Amen.

Articles and interviews

L'Osservatore Romano March 7, 1997

On the occasion of the death of Cardinal Ugo Poletti, the Prelate of Opus Dei wrote the following article entitled "To Serve, an Ideal for Great Souls," which was published in "L'Osservatore Romano" on March 7, 1997.

TO SERVE, AN IDEAL FOR GREAT SOULS

Euge serve bone et fidelis, we read in the Gospel (Mt 25:21): well done, good and faithful servant — loyal servant. Loyalty is the virtue that sums up the principle features of Cardinal Poletti's life and work. It is a difficult virtue because contrary to what might at first appear to be the case, loyalty is eminently creative. The dynamism of life, and even more of spiritual life, does not allow one to merely repeat formalized gestures

and clichés. Though our end in life is unchanging, circumstances change constantly. To approach life with ready made formulas would be fruitless. By its extraordinary flexibility and capacity to adapt to the times, the history of the Church is the best proof for the creative variety of means conducive to a given end. Its history has been written by men and women who, precisely because they were faithful, offered the most convincing testimony of the perennial newness of the Gospel.

I remember Cardinal Poletti above all as an example of loyalty. Without this virtue, a person called to act as the representative of a higher authority would fail, and even betray his mandate. During the twenty long years that he worked as the Vicar General of His Holiness for the city of Rome, he served under three Popes: Paul VI, John Paul I, and John Paul II, and he knew how to put forth all his talents in the service of the Supreme Apostolic Authority. And

19. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, November 10, 1994, no. 42.

none of these latter terms is insignificant: I wrote "Supreme Apostolic Authority" to stress the fact that inasmuch as he is directly responsible to God for the salvation of all souls, the Vicar of Christ is impelled by a pastoral concern that knows no limits, which he necessarily shares with his immediate collaborators. This responsibility gives rise to a spiritual tension so great that it can only be sustained by a very intense life of prayer and penance, tireless hard work, and the interior strength capable of rising to any challenge. Loyalty is a virtue proper to great souls. Its greatness lies not so much in the immense efforts required to carry out one's assigned tasks as in one's ability to live and love a life of service as one's highest ideal: to renounce wanting to stand out, to do and disappear, to finish things and to begin again, to feel fully compensated by obeying.

This is a virtue of men and women who are great because they are humble, people who are always at their post, behind the scenes, convinced that they can do nothing on their own or with their own strength alone. Therefore, they are always alert to discern the heart and mind of the person in charge, and eager to unite others to him or her as well. I think we should see the Holy Father's homily at the Mass in suffrage for Cardinal Poletti in this light. He praised the Cardinal's effort to revive people's awareness in the diocese of Rome of their bonds of unity with the Roman Pontiff. He recalled the wise way he was able to convey to the Pope an understanding of the city, thus helping him enter

into increasingly deeper harmony with the people of Rome. Precisely because he had completely identified with the Pope's pastoral concern, he was able to "impress a new vitality upon the diverse diocese of Rome."

The clergy in Rome can testify to Cardinal Poletti's enthusiasm and proverbial gentleness in preparing the Holy Father's visits to the parishes of Rome, and how he gave them suggestions for helping the Pope's visit to have a lasting effect among the faithful. To cite one example, I remember how promptly he received the Holy Father's wish to gather the students in Rome every year for a papal Mass in preparation for Christmas. Great efforts were needed to revive a particularly difficult aspect of the pastoral work in the diocese; until then there had been little fruit. But like the Pope, the Cardinal looked to the future and was able to inspire all the people concerned with new energies. I also remember his firm response to the Holy Father's proposal to restore the traditional Corpus Christi procession in a city some considered irremediably secularized. One could cite countless other quite eloquent examples.

All of this was possible thanks to Cardinal Poletti, who as a vigilant and sensible shepherd, realized that his first priority should be the priests. How can one forget the veritable siege he was subject to in his office in Rome. It was an affectionate siege, certainly, one full of trust, but a real siege none the less. It was particularly the priests who had recourse to him, and found in him without fail an understanding and demanding

shepherd, one who was gentle and strong. Perhaps this explains the new vitality Pope John Paul II alluded to earlier. Through the priests, Cardinal Poletti breathed life into the entire diocese of Rome. The Pope pointed this out in the condolence he sent to Cardinal Camilo Ruini. He recalled his “fervent dedication” as a pastor and his constant attention to “the needs of the clergy.” His mark on the diocese is bound to last for a long time, as the gradual increase in the number of priestly ordinations over the last several years shows.

He cared for the priests of the diocese and for all the faithful, one by one. Pope John Paul II said that the secret of Cardinal Poletti’s fruitful service to the Church is found in his ability to establish a “personal and affectionate relationship” with everyone. This is so proper to a good priest who is able to derive renewed energy from the spiritual paternity at the core of his priestly vocation. Although he was physically ill for years, Cardinal Poletti gave little importance to his suffering and spent himself unselfishly for others. His pains were acute and often amounted to a real Calvary. But nevertheless he always listened to his visitors calmly and with a smile. He never gave the impression that he was in a hurry or making a great effort.

The history of the Church is rich in similar examples. It is not difficult to see that fruitfulness lies in obedience; success lies in service. True happiness is only a reflection of the happiness we are able to communicate to others. This is the message, the very relevant one, of loyalty.

Tracce February, 1997

The following is the complete text of an interview granted to Michele Brambilla, a journalist for the Italian newspaper “Corriere della Sera.” The interview was published in the magazine “Tracce” in February 1997.

In September 1996, the magazine “Inside the Vatican” published a list of Church entities that are frequently attacked. Among them, was Opus Dei. This was the motivation for the following interview with Bishop Javier Echevarría.

THE PATH OF THE WORK

Father, why so many accusations against the Work? A secret society, powerful and rich, rigidly conservative. ...

Anyone who has visited a center of the Prelature or has met someone in the Work in his daily life is struck by quite a different reality, one of complete openness and normality. This is why we don’t worry about these things: the truth will always come out in the end, despite the gossip.

Opus Dei is a religious phenomenon, and yet the media analyze it with political, sociological and economic categories. Why is this?

Perhaps because, unfortunately,