

one can claim to have a monopoly on God's designs. Fifty years ago, Blessed Josemaría was considered a heretic by some who thought that he was too progressive. Today, others view us as reactionary. As I said before, these kinds of judgments only show that one needs to view the history of the Church from the proper perspective. The Church's advance is not a function of the tension between progressives and reactionaries. Its path is marked by tradition, by adherence to a divine mission given at a specific moment but valid forever. Tradition must be practiced in a living, increasingly deeper way.

How is your relationship with Pope John Paul II?

Filial, affectionate, full of trust. I saw the Pope recently and confirmed once again the full adherence of Opus Dei to his teachings and guidance as Pastor of the whole Church, successor of St. Peter, and the Vicar of Christ.

You lived alongside Josemaría Escrivá for twenty years. What kind of a person was he?

A priest of God, a great man, an affectionate father, and a very humble and joyful saint. All these qualities meant that being close to him was very enjoyable. His Christian joy was contagious. Among all that I owe him, I think my greatest debt is for the practical example he gave me. It was his example, even more than his words, that taught me how one could find God in everyday circumstances. I've had the enormous good fortune of liv-

ing with 'a spiritual giant' the founder of Opus Dei. Such good fortune is also a great responsibility for me.

Vittorio Messori, in his book "Opus Dei: Leadership and Vision in Today's Catholic Church" says that when he went to the central offices of Opus Dei, he was impressed by the solidity of the buildings, the marble floors, the columns and that the young man who accompanied him explained that this was "a matter of economy—all this has to last for centuries." Do you really believe that Opus Dei will always be present in the Church's future?

Yes I do, because when God is determined to bring something about, he is more faithful than we are; he is stronger than our weaknesses. What God wants will be. We have the certainty that God will never abandon men and women, if they do not abandon Him.

Il Sole-24 Ore May 24, 1997

On May 24, 1997, the newspaper "Il Sole-24 Ore" published the following article by Bishop Javier Echevarría entitled "Solidarity and the Value of Work."

SOLIDARITY AND THE VALUE OF WORK

Certain legal decisions have given rise to a renewed discussion in Italy of the question of the basic right

to work, and consequently of the value of work for contemporary men and women. Of course this question is universal and not just of Italian interest. The present crisis in regard to human work is based on two false conceptions. First is the materialistic conception, which for more than a century focused attention on the danger of alienation and which has been an incitement to class struggle. The second is the technocratic view, typical of the cult of efficiency, and is characterized by a purely instrumental view of work. Both of these conceptions have negative consequences for the person and society.

Every aspect of human life important for civil conscience is also important for the Church. Throughout her history the Church has been concerned with all that is truly relevant for man, whether it is a question of individual problems or of social values. Christ is God who has taken on a human nature with all its values and all its problems. And the Church, faithful to its Founder, shares with all men and women of good will their concern for solving the problems of our time, and it should bring its own specific viewpoint to bear on issues of the day.

The Catholic Church has something to say in the field of labor. Over the past hundred years —stemming from its social doctrine— she has tirelessly defended and promoted works of social justice. In our own day the social sensitivity of Christians continues to give life to new forms of solidarity with the world of work by means of professional

schools that respond to the needs of society, education, and the labor market. We should not forget that the very idea of professional schools was developed within the Church. In other times, universities, hospitals, hospices, and shelters of various types arose within the Church.

As the driving force of this human endeavor, Christians should always be aware of the purpose of work, elevating it to the dignity of a means of holiness for oneself and others.

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, was convinced that “these world crises are crises of saints.” In my opinion, his words can also be applied to the ‘crisis’ just alluded to: of man as a subject of work. If Christians sanctify themselves in their work, we can expect justice to finally triumph, corruption to be eradicated, exploitation to cease, and violence and egoism to give way to concern for the common good. Those who appreciate the admirable resources of the human spirit, and are not self-deceived in regard to the essentially moral origin of the injustices that convulse the world of work, will understand that this concrete message constitutes a true solution to ‘world crises’. Other solutions that solely aim at reforms (that is to say, at remedies external to conscience) have always proved to be illusory and utopian, because they do not defend the full liberty of the person.

The reception of “the Gospel of work,” to use Pope John Paul II’s appropriate expression in his encycli-

cal *Laborem Exercens*, will bring about a great liberation. This message is none other than the divine value hidden in the most ordinary circumstances of work when it is carried out with a desire to serve, to contribute to social development, to fraternity, to the restoration of justice, in short, to establishing that "civilization of love" of which Pope Paul VI spoke.

L'Osservatore Romano June 26, 1997

Two articles by the Prelate of Opus Dei relating to the first year of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 were published on June 26, 1997. "L'Osservatore Romano" published "Rediscovering the Merciful Love of Christ." The newspaper "Il Messaggero" of Rome published his article entitled "The Secret Meaning of the Jubilee."

REDISCOVERING THE MERCIFUL LOVE OF CHRIST

The apostles had the opportunity of living with Jesus for three years. Three years which, for all of them except the one who betrayed him, represented a radical transformation in their lives. The proximity to the Master, the opportunity to contemplate his example and to listen to his teaching, their personal friendship with Jesus, who taught them to deal with their Father God as his children,

and finally the descent upon them of the Holy Spirit, transformed them.

In thinking about the three years of preparation for the Jubilee, the thought of those three years the apostles spent close to Jesus comes frequently to mind. With God's grace, these coming three years can be for us a similar opportunity if we try to seek and befriend Jesus.

It is in this way that we will accept in our lives the invitation that Pope John Paul II makes to us in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*: we will take advantage of this great opportunity to get closer to Jesus, the Word of God and the Redeemer of Mankind, by commemorating his incarnation and birth. In this regard I like to recall that Blessed Josemaría Escrivá used to say that Jesus "is not a figure who has passed away, he is not a remembrance who is lost in history," but a Person who is alive and always present.

The help of grace

The Pope exhorts us to dedicate to Jesus the year 1997, the first of the preparatory phase of the Jubilee (see *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 40). And the Holy Father wanted to remind us that to be a Christian does not simply mean to follow a doctrine or to submit oneself to a few particular rules of conduct. The Christian follows Jesus Christ, he tries to know and love him. St. Paul summed it up with an expression that has the radicalness of an authentic witness: "Only one thing is necessary: that you live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (*Phil* 1:27).