

of the efforts of everyone to construct, day by day, a university capable of responding ever more effectively to the needs of the Church in its evangelizing mission.

The expression used by that beloved professor, “to start a university,” reminds me of the discomfort you may have to put up with during the next few years, while this edifice is being renovated. While I hope this provisional situation will be as brief as possible, all of us for some time will feel ourselves very much involved in the task of “constructing a university.” The need for this restoration work is evident to everyone, in order to prepare a more suitable site

for you and for the students who will come here to study. We should try to show our gratitude to the construction workers, praying for them and for their families. Your patience and sacrifices will benefit many people in the future, and also yourselves, if you never forget to seek, before all else, the glory of God. Besides, as Saint Josemaría used to say, how beautiful it is to plant trees whose shade others will enjoy!

Invoking for everyone the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sedes Sapientiae and Queen of the Rosary, and the intercession of Saint Josemaría, I declare the Academic Year 2002-2003 opened.

Articles and interviews

MISNA

October 3, 2002

Interview carried out by Federico Mandillo for the MISNA news agency

1. *Africa is present in the news above all because of its great human tragedies: its millions of refugees, the widespread AIDS crisis, the endless wars, especially in the tropical areas. Opus Dei will soon celebrate the canonization of its founder. What initiatives is it promoting to give rise to new hope in the African countries with the most problems? How can*

solidarity be fostered between the northern and southern hemispheres?

The most important work of the Prelature is that which each of its faithful carries out personally, with freedom and responsibility, in his own surroundings and circumstances. The African faithful of Opus Dei, who thanks be to God already number several thousand, try first of all (like the Asians, the Americans, the Europeans) to live their faith fully. And part of this effort involves promoting, shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues and friends, projects aimed at solving the material and spiritual needs

of those they live alongside. They are very aware of the suffering caused by AIDS, by poverty, by tribal rivalries, and they are trying to do everything possible to alleviate it. As Christians they see themselves called to seek sanctity in the midst of the world. And their world is the world of Africa, with all its good points and bad.

In addition to this personal effort, the Prelature of Opus Dei has started numerous activities in Africa, principally health and educational facilities: hospitals, universities, schools, centers of professional formation for women.

Since 1957 a good number of faithful of Opus Dei from various countries have moved to Africa to exercise their professions there and to serve their fellow citizens as doctors, veterinarians, nurses, teachers, agronomists. They have spread the spirit that animates Opus Dei, the sanctification of professional work. Today there are also many Africans who are serving their fellow citizens in this way. And, in my view, it is the professional and apostolic work of the Africans themselves, not that of those coming from abroad, which is the true measure of the hopes of a continent where the horizons are so broad and promising.

I would like to add that Africans have much to offer Europe: their openness to supernatural realities; their joy in daily life, even amid great difficulties; their ability to communicate; their esteem for the values of family and friendship; their nobility, which stems from respect for human dignity.

2. As Prelate of Opus Dei, you work within the framework marked out by the Founder and by his first successor. What are the most important recent initiatives you can point to, especially in the mission countries in the southern hemisphere?

As Msgr. Escrivá used to say, the whole world is mission territory. Therefore the Church is called to carry out an intense apostolic activity everywhere. In Africa, the faithful of Opus Dei, together with many other people, including non-Christians, have started many projects in the forty five years they have been present on the continent. I would like to mention especially the Monkole Medical Center, in Kinshasa, a hospital that provides medical attention to people who lack the most basic necessities. This medical center now also has a number of subsidiary clinics in the Congo. I would also like to mention the Lagos Business School in Nigeria, which is dedicated to the training of African entrepreneurs, providing them with a solid preparation in business management, while also fostering their concern for the needs of their community. To bring about human development and to combat poverty and corruption, a good moral formation is required, along with knowledge of the Church's social doctrine, and a solid training in management.

With the canonization of Blessed Josemaría so near, I cannot fail to mention the Harambee 2002 project. The money raised through donations from faithful who are attending the canonization and from other people will be used to support educational programs in Africa.

Harambee 2002 is an example of what I have just emphasized. It is the Africans themselves who have to be the key force in Africa's advancement. And education is indispensable for human development, since it opens the doors to work and to both material and spiritual progress. Education is a path, if I may use the expression, to sow hope. The Harambee 2002 project wants to make a small contribution to this immense collective effort.

In this context, it seems only right that we recall with gratitude the thousands of missionaries who for centuries have dedicated themselves generously to educational activities, spending their whole lives in service to others. How great has been their love for Africa, and how greatly the Africans love them!

3. *How will the southern hemisphere be present at the canonization on October 6?*

I am very happy to say that the southern hemisphere will have a substantial presence there. People are coming to Rome from 84 countries—many of them from Africa, after making great sacrifices. I know of people who have tightened their belts for a long time to be able to pay for the trip. There will be a number of African choirs represented in St. Peter's Square on October 6.

But most of the people from countries in the southern hemisphere who want to come, cannot do so. Thus the Organizing Committee for the Canonization is doing everything possible for those who

could not come. Thanks to the inestimable help of the Vatican, of Italian institutions, and of the media, in many countries of the world millions of people will be able to follow the ceremony on television, by radio and Internet. I would like to take this opportunity to express my wholehearted gratitude for the generous help of so many people, also on behalf of those who are far away and will not have an opportunity to express their own gratitude. It is impossible to mention all of them here, because the list would be too long. But I can give them my assurance that I am praying for every one of them.

Corriere della Sera October 5, 2002

Interview with Luigi Accattoli published in this Milanese newspaper, on the eve of the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei

1. *The Church is about to proclaim the holiness of your Founder to the entire Church. Aside from obvious advantages, isn't there a danger of falling into triumphalism and self-congratulation?*

I don't believe that any such danger exists, because canonizing the founder of Opus Dei is clearly not the same as canonizing the faithful of the Prelature. Moreover, the contrast between Josemaría Escrivá's sanctity and the reality of the personal life of each one of us will now be more evident, and this will spur us to strive to overcome our own defects. I have been a member of Opus Dei since