

surprise me. I repeat: it seems to me to be a pastoral instrument that is flexible and very effective. At least, that has been my experience.

Regarding The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown, what do you have to say about its influence on Opus Dei? Has this book, and the commotion that it caused, had any influence on Opus Dei's strategy in relation to the communications media.

Millions of people know what the reality of Opus Dei is. And for these persons, the caricature of the Church and of Opus Dei—as part of the Church—that this book presents could not produce anything but sadness. While those who didn't know Opus Dei before and became interested in it, have had an opportunity to learn more about it. I give thanks to God because in many cases this curiosity has given rise to the desire to seek Christ, to find him, and to love him, with a serious Christian commitment. In some cases it has led to a radical conversion; in other cases, to a specific vocation from God (to Opus Dei, for example).

Some people have criticized Opus Dei as being attracted to power. What do you have to say about power in the Church?

Like all Catholics, the faithful of Opus Dei seek to serve others. This is the example Christ gave. The service that Opus Dei provides to the dioceses in which it is present consists in contributing to the spread of Christ's message in the middle of the world. One only has to ask the thousands of people who receive Christ-

ian formation in centers of the Prelature to discover the role that Opus Dei plays in their lives: how it helps them to commit themselves in a Christian way to the improvement of society, to participate more fully in parish life, to more fully support, pray for, and love their bishop and the other pastors.

Argentina October 2, 2008

"Opus Dei: 80 Years of Sowing Peace." An article published in the Diario Clarín on the 80th anniversary of the Foundation of Opus Dei

Eighty years have gone by since October 2, 1928, feast of the Holy Guardian Angels. On that day St. Josemaría—by divine inspiration, as Pope John Paul II declared in the papal document *Ut Sit*—founded Opus Dei. Pope Benedict XVI, when he was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in a homily given at a Mass of thanksgiving for the beatification of Opus Dei's founder, stated that "Josemaría Escrivá saw this call as addressed not to himself alone, but above all as a message to pass on to others: to encourage them to strive for sanctity, and to gather a community of brothers and sisters for Christ." Well aware of this responsibility, "he journeyed untiringly through several continents, speaking to everyone to encourage them to be holy, to live the adventure of being

Christians wherever their lives took them. Thus he became a great man of action, who lived by God's will and called others to it."

Speaking of the Christians of the first centuries, St. Josemaría said that the homes of those first brothers and sisters of ours in the faith "were centers for the spreading of the Gospel and its message. Families no different from other families of those times, but living with a new spirit, which spread to all those who were in contact with them. This is what the first Christians were, and this is what we have to be: sowers of peace and joy, the peace and joy that Jesus has brought to us" (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 30). That is how, right from the beginning, he described the role of the Prelature's faithful, in the heart of the Church: "to sow peace and joy" in all human activities in the middle of the world.

Benedict XVI has said that, for a believer, the word "peace" is one of the most beautiful names for God. He is a Father who wants understanding to be present among all his children. To say "peace be with you" is the same as wishing that God be with you, and with every man and woman.

Through its evangelizing mission, the Church contributes to an abundant sowing of peace. As St. Josemaría writes, "the Lord wants his children in all the honest pathways of this earth, sowing the seeds of understanding and forgiveness, of harmony, charity and peace" (*The Forge*, no. 373).

By making Christ known, we also carry out an abundant sowing

of joy. The joy of God's children doesn't stem from favorable circumstances, nor is it merely a physiological joy. Like anyone else, a man or woman of faith experiences weariness and sickness, hardship and anxiety, doubts and setbacks. But they always know they are very much loved by God. They rely on him, as his son or daughter, and, with his help, recover their joy if they have lost it.

The human and the divine are interwoven in the work of Christian evangelization: concern for others, charity, respect for others' freedom. St. Josemaría, during a large get-together in Argentina in 1974 (a year marked by tragic conflicts in that beloved South American nation), insisted: "you have to sow peace and joy on all sides. Don't say a single word against anyone. Walk arm in arm with those who think differently than you do. Never mistreat anyone. Practice fraternal charity with all men and women, being sowers of peace and joy."

Every anniversary is an opportunity to look towards the future. On the eightieth anniversary of Opus Dei's founding, I ask God that this small portion of the Church that is the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, will always carry out at the heart of civil society the mission he entrusted to it in 1928: to bring about in souls a generous sowing of the Gospel's peace and joy, which will also permeate the structures of society and make them more human.