

The second is the need to stir all the faithful to an even more attentive participation in Holy Mass, with the awareness that it is the sublime moment to engage in the *ars orandi*, the art of prayer, which John Paul II stressed when the new millennium began.

And finally, we also need to rediscover every day the strong bonds between Holy Mass and daily life as we grasp ever more fully the *ars vivendi*, the art of spending each day in spiritual union with Jesus in the Eucharist. Thus we will discover a new horizon in our daily life: the marvelous adventure of meeting God.

The Holy Father will evaluate the proposals the synod fathers have presented and make the decisions he considers opportune. But we are already experiencing the positive effects of the synod. We bishops who took part in it have gone deeper into the infinite treasure of the Eucharist, in which “is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to men” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 5).

It is my ardent hope that we take this truth to heart and spread it in concentric circles, and that its fruits be seen in the way many Catholics practice their Christian faith, especially in their participation in the Holy Mass. Following the work and prayer of these days, I look forward to a new moment of grace for the whole Church.

## Warsaw November 29, 2005

*Interview granted to the Polish News Agency, KAI.*

*Your excellency, what is the core of Opus Dei's message for the contemporary world?*

Opus Dei's message is simply an expression of the call of God's love to all men and women to deeply live and spread the Christian message. What is special is its emphasis on the sanctification of one's daily work and circumstances.

St. Josemaría Escrivá united two truths that have frequently been separated. On the one hand, he used to repeat that the world is not a negative reality. “God saw that it was good,” says the book of Genesis. On the other hand, and this is also taught by Genesis, man was placed in the world precisely in order to work.

Consequently, in order to fulfill God's will, to live one's faith fully, to be a saint, there is no need to abandon the world. One's work and ordinary occupations can be converted into a means and an occasion to live, in an heroic manner, charity towards God and one's neighbor.

*From its beginnings, Opus Dei has preached the idea of holiness in everyday realities carried out at each moment of one's life. It is a beautiful ideal, but how can it be made a reality, amid so many problems*

*that crop up each day and the dizzying rhythm of daily life?*

The first condition is to gracefully accept both the problems and the dizzying rhythm that you mentioned. If we refuse to be discouraged by the difficulties, we are already half way there.

But the essential thing is to cultivate a friendship with Jesus Christ each day, showing that we love him in truth, and not just in theory. We also need to dedicate some time every day to making personal contact with God: in Holy Mass, prayer, reading the Gospel... It isn't that difficult. What's needed is the decision to do so and the effort to organize oneself, perhaps considering how we can make better use of our time, or give up some of the time devoted to television.

Jesus himself told us: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If we allow God to enter our lives, our problems won't go away but, shared with him, we will see them in a new light, as an opportunity to serve him and those around us. If we open the door of our heart to God, those around us will also enter.

Besides speaking with God, we also need to exercise the human virtues. St. Josemaría Escrivá always emphasized the importance of cultivating the virtues that make social life more pleasant: generosity, cheerfulness, a spirit of service, love for freedom.

*Some members of Opus Dei carry out important functions in public life, includ-*

*ing intellectuals, businessmen and politicians. How can one be a loyal and sincere Christian in politics? Politics has been defined as "the art of compromise." And a Christian cannot "compromise" in matters of principle. How can you reconcile these two positions.*

In the first place, one shouldn't exaggerate. Being a loyal Christian can at times be difficult, but there's no need to over dramatize it. Many non-Christians also act conscientiously, with firm reference points that they consider non-negotiable. Otherwise, they would be people without principles, and a man without principles is one in whom an upright person can place no trust. I have seen non-Christian politicians give up a cabinet post for reasons of conscience, because they disagreed with a decision of their government. If a Catholic, to defend his faith, were to see himself as morally obliged to take that step, he would not be doing something unheard of, although it would be a question of an exceptional case.

Politics, by its very nature, calls for debate, consensus, a seeking of agreement. But first it requires prudence and, in a special way, the desire to serve the common good, integrity. Given this foundation, the effort of politicians, including Catholics, requires working seriously, explaining one's reasons clearly, listening to others' points of view, even when one disagrees with them. To sanctify this work, one must carry it out well, with quality and with charity, rectifying when one makes a mistake. For Catholics, political tasks are not an uncomfortable responsibility but an exciting challenge.

Permit me to add that most of the faithful in Opus Dei have quite normal jobs in society, although all of them try to discover the divine meaning hidden in every job when it is carried out with love for God and the desire to serve one's neighbor.

*Opus Dei places great value on confession. Nevertheless, this sacrament has almost disappeared in many countries and in some local churches. What is the role of confession in the life of someone who wants to be a Catholic?*

Opus Dei does not place "great value" on confession, in the sense that this is a new point in its message. One only has to look briefly at the Catechism of the Catholic Church to realize that confession is something desired by God and encouraged by the Church. The Prelature has the duty of reminding the Catholic faithful that the possibility of making use of this sacrament is a great gift of God that we should be grateful for, not an annoying imposition. It is a means that we need.

In confession God forgives our sins. The word "sin" perhaps sounds a bit strong today, but the concept is as valid as that of "conscience." In the life of each of us good and bad coexist, and it's not to human justice that we have to answer for what is bad in us, but above all to God. The difference is that God does everything possible to forgive us.

So our faith teaches us that the Sacrament of Penance is an immense

gift that liberates us. Confession helps us to be realistic and to recognize our limitations without euphemisms. It shows us the love of a God who always forgives, because he is a Father. In addition, our experience of mercy invites us to sincerely practice mercy with everyone we meet.

*How do you evaluate contemporary culture? The Church has always maintained a dialogue with culture, trying to evangelize it. As Catholics, which currents should we accept in contemporary culture, and which should we reject?*

I don't think it's possible to make a generalized judgment about contemporary culture, because any evaluation requires a lot of qualifications. In regard to the second part of your question, I don't think Catholics are faced with a choice between the currents of culture that they should accept and those that they should reject. Throughout history Catholics have been creators of culture. They have known how to express their faith in the philosophy they help formulate, their hope in the art they foster, their charity in works of service. Christians now have a great responsibility to present their faith in cultural terms that are understandable and attractive to their fellow citizens.

Overcoming relativism, which Pope Benedict XVI has referred to a number of times, requires that Catholics, and specifically the laity, make a constructive contribution, not just a condemnation. In particular, this applies to what we might call "profes-

sional cultures”: the culture proper to the scientific or legal community, that of the world of film or fashion. In all morally sound professional cultures Christians have to be present, not only to carry on an external dialogue, as though from the outside, but to offer their contribution from within. They need to carry out scientific research that respects the dignity of the person and that improves the quality of life, encourage laws that protect the family, etc.

To use a metaphor, we have to “translate” into all the professional languages the great Christian lexicon, which also includes some of the most important accomplishments of human progress: truth, freedom, beauty, charity.

*A few months ago Brother Roger Schutz of Taizé died, a great promoter of ecumenism. What is Opus Dei doing in this field? What should each of us do, as Christians, for Christian unity?*

As far as the work of Opus Dei in the field of ecumenism is concerned, I could point out various things connected with the situation of the faithful of the Prelature. For example, I recently had the opportunity of participating in the episcopal ordination of a priest of the Prelature in Tallinn, Estonia, where an intense ecumenical activity is being carried out in a climate of fraternity with non-Catholic Christians and also with believers of other religions.

But I would like to refer to a more

institutional aspect, very dear to St. Josemaría: the non-Catholic cooperators of Opus Dei. Since the Holy See granted its approval, in the times of Pius XII, thousands of persons of all religions have been cooperating with the work of Opus Dei all over the world. The help they provide the Prelature represents, as is obvious, a sign of affection towards the Catholic Church, the overcoming of differences, a drawing close that prepares the path of unity.

*With your visit to Poland, how do you see our country and the Church here? What are the strong points in our Catholicism and in what points could we improve?*

I think the best way to answer your question is to recall the messages that John Paul II directed to the Poles, especially the addresses that he gave on his various trips.

I have had the opportunity to come to this beloved country on various occasions, to meet many Poles, to enjoy their hospitality. I can say that for me the history of the Church in Poland represents a constant source of encouragement. Its strength in the faith and its loyalty in the face of difficulties are a firm reference point. It is also good to see that God is rewarding this fidelity, with the flourishing of priestly vocations here.

Perhaps this is one of the challenges of the present moment. Circumstances have changed, freedom is no longer at stake. The moment has arrived to

struggle for other goals. It is always the time for faithfulness.

*The Servant of God, John Paul II, has often encouraged Polish Catholics to undertake a "creative participation in the European scene." What, in your opinion, should be the role of Polish Catholicism in the evangelization of Europe? And specifically, how should we carry out the mission of evangelizing Europe?*

Given what I have just said, I am convinced that Poland is called to play an important role in the new evangelization of Europe. As regards the way to carry this out, I think we need to take into account that we find ourselves faced with an evangelization that is new, as John Paul II repeated, and as Benedict XVI has also stressed. It is new because, for many Europeans, ours will be the first announcement that they receive of the good news of the Gospel. And it is new because we have to transmit the faith with new vigor, with renewed joy and eagerness. Europe not only has Christian roots; it also has a beautiful Christian future.

*The Holy Father John Paul II met with those in Opus Dei on various occasions and had a high regard for the Work. He elevated the Founder to the altars. Within the rich heritage of this Pope, what aspects do you consider especially impor-*

*tant? How should we undertake the work that he has left to us?*

John Paul II has left us with a very rich inheritance. He has bequeathed to us, among other things, the example of his courageous faith. It might seem paradoxical, but I think that he was a popular Pope because he knew how to be "unpopular" when, in defense of the truth, he was called upon to be so.

John Paul II was very aware that Christ has saved all mankind and therefore he traveled to the furthest corners of the planet to announce the Gospel. Anticipating the times, he took giant steps in "globalizing" the apostolate. His example moves us to not limit our zeal to the evangelization of Europe or the historic frontiers of Christianity, but to extend our concern to the whole world, with magnanimity. His holy life has helped highlight the perennial newness of the Christian message.

John Paul II has also passed on to us many more legacies, all exceedingly rich. I have only pointed out two because they present us with a gift and also a task. To make his legacy bear fruit, we can count on another great gift of his: his witness to hope. Certainly hope is a gift from God, but it is strengthened by the example of the saints. And John Paul II, day after day, offered our world an heroic witness to hope.