

happy here on earth. Along with suffering, of course, since it is inevitable, but happy nevertheless, truly happy.

Milan

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Interview in Il Sole 24 Ore

Why is sanctifying one's work central to Opus Dei's message?

Work is seen as something positive, something good. Our Founder used to say that we can recognize God's presence not only in the world of nature, but also in the way we work, in the effort we make.

So seeking perfection in work is characteristic of Opus Dei members?

If work is a place where we can meet God, it has to be done as well as possible, with professional competence. But the degree of sanctity is not determined by the kind of work one does, nor by its social standing or its monetary reward.

What about the unemployed?

It's important to help them, especially the young, to acquire the skills needed to render a service to society. As one example, Opus Dei operates a trade school in Rome (Centro ELIS) in a working class district where young people are trained. At this point, more than ten thousand of its graduates are employed.

How can someone who works in finance where speculation is common find a path to sanctity?

Sometimes we still encounter the old prejudice that such jobs are necessarily negative or dangerous for Christians. But if someone working in finance and market transactions practices this work honestly and sees it as a service to others, it can become an occasion for giving glory to God. So yes, one can find God even on Wall Street.

Then even financial speculation can be a path towards God?

It mustn't involve injustice towards persons; a sound ethical context is necessary. But Jesus said that those involved in business also need to render fruit with their talents.

Most business people never seem to think about making their "talents" bear fruit when they engage in trade....

Sometimes acting uprightly in the world of business requires heroism. A person with an upright conscience will need to confront unjust practices that are morally unacceptable. In fact, sanctity is always heroic. We are all called to sanctity, and so everyone is capable, with God's help, of making "heroic" decisions when circumstances require it.

Are members of Opus Dei given some special guidance in these matters?

They receive no guidance on how to exercise their professional work. What they do receive is Christian formation that gives them a

deep moral awareness. It leads them to grow, to improve. In other words, Opus Dei helps them to grow in virtue and seek holiness, to be honest, loyal, hard working, and understanding, to learn from one's mistakes and ask for pardon.

Why is it often said that Opus Dei is powerful, especially in the world of finance and business?

This got started when some people wanted to harm our apostolic work. There are some influential persons in Opus Dei, but most members are ordinary people who work in all fields. They, however, don't make news.

Then there are no secret agreements or business compacts in Opus Dei?

If such things existed, the members themselves would be the first to reject them. St. Josemaría often said that he wanted to leave his spiritual children a legacy of love for freedom and good humor. I can affirm that this is so.

In their work, then, members of Opus Dei work on their own responsibility, without forming a network?

Absolutely. It often happens that persons in Opus Dei even go in opposing directions as they try to find the best way to make their profession contribute to the good of society. Each one is responsible for his or her own actions, whether they succeed or fail.

So ethics is at the heart of sanctifying one's work?

That's right; to consider work only from a technical point of view, to look only at its specific practical aspects would be to cheapen it. As a human action, work necessarily has an impact on each one's personality; it makes a person better or worse because it derives its value from a higher order, an ethical dimension that goes beyond technical considerations.

Is ethics individual or corporate?

When I say that ethics makes individuals more perfect I don't mean to imply individualism. Everyone agrees that exercising a profession at a high moral level will contribute to the common good. A person who doesn't cheat his clients, who pays his taxes, who respects agreements, indirectly attracts people's trust and contributes to the good functioning of society.

We have already spoken about the unemployed. But how can one sanctify one's work in places where people are dying of hunger?

Every Christian is called upon to react, to not simply be embarrassed or scandalized in the face of extreme poverty but to take action, seeking and finding solutions to remedy it. No one can consider himself exempt from this responsibility. It is a central theme in the teaching of St. Josemaría.