

to women in the Church. Do you agree?

Certainly. For, as the Holy Father has reminded us, the Church is a woman: one only needs to remember the role of our Lady. The topic of the role of women isn't new, and in fact women have played an important role in the development of the Church. Moreover, Opus Dei has always viewed women as playing a central role in the life of the Church.

What in your view is the role and responsibility of those in government regarding the crisis that for years now has afflicted the western world, especially in countries such as Italy?

I think it's important not to place all the blame on those in government. First we need to ask ourselves what each of us personally is doing each day, whatever our role in society may be. We can't place the responsibility only on others, those whom we elect to govern and whom we can always make demands of. We should first ask ourselves how we live, how we work, how we get along with others, with our own family. To emerge from this crisis, the commitment of each and every one of us is needed, not just those who govern.

Interview granted to *Dong-A*, a major daily newspaper, South Korea (December 16, 2013)

By Kap Sik Kim

The film directed by Joffé develops the history of the Spanish Civil War in connection with St. Josemaría's life. We know that Opus Dei collaborated in the production of the movie. Could you tell us why you decided to collaborate with this project and in what way you helped in the production?

When the producer and director came to Rome to gather information, we provided them with advice so that the movie might faithfully reflect events referring to St. Josemaría's life. We gave them all the assistance we could, since they were sincerely interested in going to the sources. This is all the assistance the Prelature provided: facilitating documentation and historical materials.

I know that many Catholics with devotion to St. Josemaría (among them many faithful of Opus Dei) decided to collaborate personally in the spread of this film, precisely because of the positive message that it gives about the power of forgiveness and about the lovable figure of a Catholic priest who loved God and mankind deeply.

I am very grateful to the director Roland Joffé for the great professional skill he showed.

This film speaks about forgiveness, sin, evil, and the path of conversion. Can you tell us your perception of the movie? What was your reaction when viewing the film? Is there any aspect that you feel might have been done better?

It has helped remind me of so many thousands of priests who spend their lives with joy in the service of souls, in the service of society.

It also reminded me of an attitude of St. Josemaría that I had the good fortune of being a direct witness to: his capacity to imitate Christ on the Cross with his arms wide open to everyone. Open to those on the left, on the center, and on the right; to the poor and the rich; to all men and women without exception. He lived in a heroic way during the Spanish Civil War, but he also did so right from his youth, and later during the rest of his life. It is the openness to Christ that Pope Francis speaks about so often, and that provides such a timely message.

Undoubtedly every movie has to limit itself to a few specific events. This one only gives a few hints about St. Josemaría during a particular period of his life. At the same time, I realize that it is not a biographical film. The main character is inserted into a filmed story that has its own proper autonomy.

Some have said that this film is an answer to the Da Vinci Code. What do you think?

Opus Dei as such already responded to this, taking advantage of the immense public interest to carry out a wide ranging catechesis about the figure of Jesus Christ and about the Catholic Church, as well as to inform people about this part of the Church that is the Prelature of Opus Dei. I give thanks to God for the thousands of people who came closer to the Church thanks to this apparent attack.

On the other hand, I have read that both the director of the film (Roland Joffé), and the producers have said on numerous occasions that their intention was not to respond to anyone. At the same time, I think that, in fact, *There Be Dragons* can serve as a good clarification, since it expresses the truth cinemagraphically on questions related to the message of Christianity and the Church, which were falsified by the movie that you mentioned. I will not hide the fact that I would be pleased if many of the viewers of that movie would see and enjoy *There Be Dragons*, and thus obtain a more complete and true picture of God's grace, forgiveness and holiness, realities to which every human being aspires.

The Da Vinci Code movie and novel have spread a clearly negative picture of Opus Dei. In what aspects was the reality of Opus Dei twisted in this movie?

The principal cause of sorrow was that the book gave a very frivolous and superficial picture of the person of Christ. In addition, the

caricature of Opus Dei was so grotesque and far from reality that it was almost comical. Seen from this perspective, I can say that perhaps it helped to provide experience on how to make oneself better known, with an enormous audience. In this area too one needs a little patience.

What type of institution is Opus Dei? What are its goals?

The specific mission of Opus Dei, within the Catholic Church, is to remind people that all the baptized, men and women, are called to follow and love God, and to love one's neighbor, specifically through ordinary life. St. Josemaría said that there is something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and that it is up to each of us to discover this. No honorable human action can be an obstacle to friendship with God, to an encounter with Christ. The goals of Opus Dei are, therefore, spiritual: to help many men and women to seek, to find, to draw close to, and to love God and their neighbor in and through daily life.

From the juridical point of view, Opus Dei is a personal prelature, one of the forms foreseen by the Catholic Church to organize its pastoral task in the world.

How many faithful and priests are there in Opus Dei?

At the present time there are 90,000 members, 2,000 of whom are priests. Among the lay faithful

of Opus Dei one finds women and men of every class and condition, most of them married.

What does Opus Dei do? What kind of spirituality is actually promoted by Opus Dei? Why do some Catholic sectors say that Opus Dei is traditionalist and close to fundamentalism.

St. Josemaría frequently said that Opus Dei is like a great school of catechism. As I mentioned above, this takes place wherever God has sought us out: in the circumstances of ordinary life, in our work, in our family, with our friends, when resting.... It is, one could say, an adventure of love and of joyful fidelity. Opus Dei offers its help to anyone who wants to respond to this divine call. The Prelature offers activities of Christian formation and the possibility of spiritual accompaniment, adapted to each one's personal life.

The spirit of Opus Dei is based on the Gospel, on trust in God's loving fatherhood, on faith in the risen Christ, on the action of the Holy Spirit, and on the sacramental life, meant for every soul. Opus Dei fulfills this mission, in the heart of the Church, as a portion of the people of God, in full communion with the Pope and with the bishops of each diocese. It is a form of catechesis, complementary to that which the parish, for example, offers, to help ordinary people find God in their daily life and to share the joy of this encounter with their

colleagues, friends and acquaintances.

We know that Opus Dei had a close relationship with Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Perhaps for this reason, in the Western press some have said that Opus Dei is an institution that protects the papacy, or assists the Vatican financially. Perhaps you can tell us something about the relationship that Opus Dei has with the Pope, and with the Vatican.

St. Josemaría always loved and felt himself loved by the Roman Pontiffs that he knew: Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, over a period of 36 years. I often heard him say: “From the Holy See, from the Holy Father, nothing but good can come to us.” For a Catholic, the Pope—whoever he may be—will always be the Vicar of Christ.

Afterward, it is true that there was a trusting and spontaneous relationship between John Paul II and the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría, whose beatification we are awaiting with joy. The Pope saw in Bishop del Portillo a loyal son who spoke the truth clearly and simply. For example, John Paul II once said jokingly that Opus Dei was powerful, to which Don Alvaro replied: “Your Holiness, our only power, our only strength is prayer.” And the Pope, nodding his head, answered: “that’s what I was referring to.”

Of course, John Paul II and Benedict XVI supported Opus

Dei, as they did all the Church’s children. Our hope is that it can be said, of these Popes and of those who come afterwards, that they could lean on Opus Dei, which exists for that purpose: to serve the Church. On our part, expanding throughout the world and getting new vocations, if it were not to serve the universal Church and the local Churches better, also here in Korea, would be of no interest to us.

When Pope Francis spoke for the first time from the balcony of blessings, he mentioned all people of good will. The thought struck me that, besides Catholics, the Pope bears on his shoulders the weight, the joys and the sorrows of all humanity. Therefore, along with joy, I felt also the intense desire that all of us pray for the successor of Peter, and a filial eagerness to invite people to love the Roman Pontiff.

How are Opus Dei’s activities financed, and how are its expenditures covered in educational, medical, and apostolic initiatives?

Thanks be to God, many educational and social initiatives have arisen all over the world inspired by St. Josemaría’s message—to seek God through ordinary life. They come about through the personal responsibility and organizing efforts of many different people. For example, in the case of schools, through the parents of the students, who are the ones most interested in their children’s education. Opus

Dei does not intervene in this effort; it respects each person's freedom to strive to better society. The same is true of initiatives in the health field, or in social and cultural endeavors, etc. Those who have helped give rise to each of these also assist in their financing. A healthy principle of autonomy and of respect for each person's free effort is fostered. What the Prelature of Opus Dei offers is pastoral care and spiritual formation.

It is important to remember that the goal of Opus Dei, as a part of the Church, is not to organize these types of initiatives, but rather to help make Christ present in the world, to serve souls. This is something that Pope Francis explained very clearly in his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

The Cardinal Prefect for the Evangelization of Peoples and of Interreligious Dialogue recently visited Korea. The questions that arise when anyone from the Vatican visits us are: the possibility of naming a Korean Cardinal, the canonization of new Korean martyrs, a visit by the Pope to this country. Do you have any information in this regard?

I am sure that when the Pope does travel to Korea, he will be received with the immense affection that this country is capable of. But as far as appointments go, or decisions about the Pope's trips, I have no information. Personally I would be very happy to see so many Korean martyrs raised to the altars, who

have given their lives to announce the reign of Christ's love in that beloved country.

In the movie we mentioned, we see the activity of a priest in a difficult political context and an example of what a priest should be. Presently in Korea we have a democratic system, but some priests have expressed opposition to the results of the recent elections, and have even asked that they be nullified. What is your opinion about political pronouncements by priests?

Priests intervene, in union with the bishop, when fundamental ethical questions are involved, directly linked to human dignity. But they should always respect the temporal freedom of the Catholic faithful, since on many questions there may not be a single solution, but several possible legitimate solutions. I am not acquainted with the specific situation of your country, but it is clear that we priests are called to be priests for everyone, not only for those who think as we do, and we should stick closely to the Gospel: living it and preaching it.

Could you give us a brief personal introduction? How did you meet Opus Dei and how did you become a priest?

I did my secondary studies in a high school run by the Marists. And during those years, when I reached the age of 16, God entered into my life, and I began my dedication in Opus Dei. In 1950 I moved to Rome to study canon law in the Angelicum and civil law in

the Lateran University, for the licentiate and the doctorate, and I was ordained a priest in 1955. From the time that I arrived in Rome, I received the great gift from God of living close to St. Josemaría. It is a gift for which I can never be sufficiently grateful.

Today's society is marked by a religious crisis. Many people have distanced themselves from God, with a selfish and materialistic outlook. Perhaps they have more financial means, but there seem to be ever fewer happy people. How can one attain happiness and interior peace?

The secret to being happy is not in leading a comfortable life. As you well point out, there are people who have substantial material goods but have not attained interior peace. What is very important is dedication to others. Sincerely giving oneself to others is so effective that God rewards it with a humility filled with joy, as St. Josemaría used to say.

Jesus told us: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If we allow God to enter into our life, our problems won't disappear; but shared with him, we will see them in another light, as an opportunity to serve him and to serve others. If we open our actions, our heart, to God, the people around us will also enter there. Love for Christ, conversation with him in prayer and in the Eucharist, will lead us to willingly serve others, and to be happy with everyone.

What motto or phrase do you like best?

My motto as a bishop is "*Deo omnis gloria*," all the glory for God. Everything that happens in our lives—the good and also what does not seem so good—acquires meaning if we take advantage of it to love God more. Living in order to glorify God is the secret to a happy life.

If you had not become a priest and a bishop, what would you have been?

I don't know, I suppose that I would have been the father of a family and a stock broker. The important thing is that God got into my life and led me by unsuspected paths that have filled me with happiness, not exempt from difficulties, as is only natural for anyone's path in life. My experience is that trusting in God, living face to face with him, opens up much broader horizons than one could ever imagine.

Do you have any plan to visit our country?

I was in Korea in 1987 with Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría. I have warm memories of that visit and I hope to return, now that some faithful of Opus Dei are living and working there. People in Korea understand very well the spirit that Opus Dei fosters of seeking holiness in ordinary life: in work, in the family, in social relationships, etc.