

to fill an entire lifetime, to transform a gray existence into the potent, positive and peaceful strength that our society needs. A healthy non-conformism characterizes the young soul. St. Josemaría said: “As a young man I was rebellious and I still am now. Because I’m not into a lot of protesting that doesn’t offer a positive solution, nor do I feel like filling life with disorder. I rebel against all that! I want to be a child of God, to get to know God, behave like a man who knows he has an eternal destiny and at the same time goes through life doing the good that he can, understanding, excusing, forgiving, living alongside others...”

These days in Poland will offer numerous opportunities for us to practice mercy, with a spirit of service. Situations such as living with strangers, long waits, heat and cold, lack of sleep and other discomforts provide us with opportunities to meet and help others as Christ would do. Hopefully with this experience, each one will return home with a resolution – something specific and personal – that will help spread the power of God’s tenderness to every corner of this world.

If we convert these days into a “school of mercy,” each pilgrim will go home with their backpack full of hope, capable of imparting the inexhaustible treasure possessed by a soul that lets itself be embraced by God.

“Mercy, The Work of God,” in *Niedziela*, Poland (September 2016)

By Pawel Zuchniewicz

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Javier Echevarría, was among the one thousand bishops who were present for World Youth Day in Krakow. During those days he met with several thousand young people taking part in the activities of spiritual formation the Prelature offers.

Opus Dei was founded by St. Josemaría Escrivá on October 2, 1928. As the founder said, he had then “26 years of age, God’s grace, and good humor.” Today that apostolic work counts on more than 90,000 faithful (some 2,000 are priests), and is present in sixty countries, including Poland. The initiatives that many people of Opus Dei carry out include numerous works of charity. One example, among others, is Harambee Africa, an international organization that promotes social and educational programs in sub-Saharan Africa. This initiative was begun to commemorate the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá in 2002.

We held this interview with the second successor to St. Josemaría (after Blessed Alvaro del Portillo) on Friday, July 29. It took place

right after the Way of the Cross that Pope Francis presided over in the Parque Jordan de Blonia in Krakow.

What are your first reflections after the Way of the Cross?

The Way of the Cross is always an encounter with Christ's love. A painful encounter but at the same time hopeful and purifying. Recalling the moments of the Passion always helps me to realize that Christ continues loving mankind, each one of us. And seeing so many boys and girls following behind the Cross led me to consider that young people today continue seeking him. They aren't satisfied with substitutes for love.

Besides, here the Way of the Cross has especially brought to mind the memory of St. John Paul II, the inspirer of these World Youth Days and Archbishop of Krakow before his election as Pope. His life, and not only the final stage, when his face became an icon of suffering, was a determined effort to carry joyfully the cross of each day, with Christ, for the salvation of mankind.

St. John Paul II began the World Youth Days and Benedict XVI continued them. Pope Francis has taken up the baton in coming to Krakow, the City of Mercy. How do you see these three pontiffs in their eagerness to seek out young people?

I see continuity in the effort to address themselves to young people. On the one hand, because the Church is always beautiful, capable of reaching young people as well as the aged. And also because both St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and now Pope Francis have only sought to make Christ present. They are his vicars, and thus have never tried to shine with their own light. They have tried to lead young people to look at Christ, and Christ always attracts.

In the months leading up to World Youth Day we saw a growing risk of terroristic attacks in Western Europe, also owing to the crisis of migration... How can the fear that arises in people for this reason be overcome?

Immigration and terrorism are distinct problems. Terrorism should not be used as an excuse to shut the doors to those who see themselves forced to abandon their place of origin.

I do not have political formulas—that is not my mission—to solve these problems. But the most human and most Christian solution always passes through a dialogue with God, in prayer, and a dialogue among men and women. In the face of those news reports or fears we should pray, for prayer is the beginning of the path that leads to peace.

St. Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei, encouraged us to contemplate Christ on the Cross with his arms open for everyone:

those on the right, those in the center, those on the left; those above and those below. Christ's Cross—he told us—is like the plus sign in addition, a sign of union and not division. That is the essential Christian attitude: to bring Christ's charity to every corner of the world, and now especially to those thousands of refugees who are arriving in our countries. Logically, this needs to be done in a responsible way, and for this, dialogue is also important and studying which solutions are most suitable in each case.

Recently, mercy is the most used word in the Church and in the world. Isn't it being abused somewhat?

God is mercy, and if the Church's mission is to speak about God, logically it has to speak about his mercy. Certainly, it's not enough just to speak about mercy; we also need to live it with our neighbor. Mercy is much more than just a nice word.

One of the acts during the Jubilee of Mercy will be the canonization of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who is another extraordinary example of dedication to others. She put prayer at the foundation of her work, and especially Eucharistic adoration. As she once said: "Without my prayer I wouldn't be able to work for even a half hour."

I would also like to recall that this eagerness to care for the needy was habitual in St. Josemaría Escrivá. He saw Christ in the poor, and he did all he could to let patients and the poor sense God's

mercy made present through their brothers and sisters in the faith. Therefore he always recommended that the faithful of the Work draw close with joy to Christ suffering in the sick and the poor. And, thanks be to God, we can see this concern today in many different countries.

Opus Dei, which you preside over, carries out a broad apostolic work with young people. How do you help those who are young to draw spiritual fruit from this period in their life?

We need to remind young people that our Lord is counting on them, and also realize this ourselves. He asks the boys and girls to learn how to give themselves by loving their parents, and also by their study, by their integral and clean life, by their positive rebellion, which refuses to give in to the blackmail of a false freedom. He also counts on their capacity to give themselves to a noble cause. In his messages for the World Youth Days, St. John Paul II used to encourage young people to give their lives to God, if they sense this call; and now Pope Francis has mentioned it again.

I pray that this exceptional encounter that we have experienced in this land of Krakow may also be an occasion for many decisions of self-giving to living the faith in a joyful and consistent way. In most cases, this will mean a lay Christian dedication specified in marriage or in apostolic celibacy, but without excluding, of course, the call to the priesthood or to the consecrated

life. And I want to make a comment here regarding the consecrated life. I would like to thank Sister Tobiana and her community for the respect and good humor with which they took care of St. John Paul II.

The message during these days in Krakow has been a call to generosity, to daring, to a form of rebellion against injustice. How can a young person respond to this call?

In Krakow, the city of St. Faustina Kowalska, the message of mercy has deep roots. It is my firm hope that the decisions of generosity that this world youth meeting can awaken in the hearts of young people, in this city and in this Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis, will also include going forth to meet the needs of peace and justice of the men and women of our time. I am thinking, above all, of so many cases, I repeat, of material need, and also spiritual need, that require the response of the “new imagination of charity” St. John Paul II spoke about.

World Youth Day is not only a meeting of hundreds of thousands of young people; there are almost a thousand bishops here. This is perhaps the largest gathering of bishops since the Second Vatican Council. What does this event mean for you, as a bishop and prelate of Opus Dei?

These are days in which one feels very deeply the communion of the whole Church. For me it has been wonderful to see once again

our beloved Cardinal Dziwisz, and to recall—on seeing him—all the help and accompaniment he provided the holy Polish pontiff. And with him, to pray for each other during these days of fraternity, which are made more intense by tangibly sensing the Church’s universality.

It was also wonderful to see the unity between the young people and the pastors, and to ask these young people many times—now and in the future of the Church—to pray for us, so that we pastors be entirely Christ’s, in such a way that, following closely in his footsteps, we may spend ourselves in our mission of serving and loving all men and women.

“Understanding Mother Teresa,” in *La Vanguardia*, (September 4, 2016)

“I vividly remember her diminutive figure, bent over by a lifetime at the service of the poorest of the poor, but always filled with an inexhaustible interior energy. The energy of love for Christ.” These moving words were spoken by John Paul II shortly after the death of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. He knew her very well.

We all felt the impact of that diminutive figure, bent over by the years, but with a surprising spirit and a moving mission of serving