

prayer, humility, and the desire to share with others the joy of a life according to the Gospel.

The future of Opus Dei?

My desire for the future is that, faithful to the charism of Saint Josemaría, all of us in Opus Dei let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit towards a renewed evangelizing drive. It is a matter of bringing the warmth of Christ to many friends, family, colleagues, neighbors. The essential thing about this evangelizing drive is not to set in motion new activities or institutions such as those that already exist, and which, in themselves, are already something very positive, but to fuel personal friendship, openness to all and the spirit of service: profoundly evangelical attitudes that are fundamental to the Christian apostolate and that, at the same time, are compatible with the flaws and weaknesses that we all have.

What will the challenges be?

The challenges are very different. In countries where Christians are a minority, such as Indonesia or Sri Lanka (to name two in which the Prelature has begun a stable work in recent years), it is very important to maintain trust in God and have great faith: the Christian commitment of the Opus Dei faithful, and of Catholics in general, is a small seed, whose fruits grow little by little, with the grace

of God. In other countries of Christian tradition, perhaps the main challenge is to live the Gospel with joy and authenticity, without blending in with a society that often puts material or economic factors first. Another obvious challenge, common to the whole Church, is the generational change. Every year about a thousand faithful of the Prelature die, people who, in a certain sense, have completed their journey: together with the pain experienced in the face of each of these human losses, they are also a great spiritual force and a support for the work of evangelization of the Church in the world.”

Interview Granted to *Famiglia Cristiana*, Italy (October 14, 2018)

By Orazio La Rocca

Carrying out academic and cultural initiatives for the formation of young people all over the world, especially among the most needy. Bringing to life hospitals, reception and rehabilitation centers with the most advanced techniques at the service of the sick, the suffering and those in need of care. But, at the same time, bringing the Word of God to everyone, near and far, men and women, rich and

poor. Without fear to evangelize businessmen, politicians and financiers as well, with a spirit of evangelical service, following in the footsteps of the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá.

This is the Opus Dei of the third millennium says the Prelate, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, 90 years after the Work was founded. Born in Paris in 1944, to Spanish parents exiled in France during the Spanish Civil War, Ocáriz has been Prelate since January 23, 2017, following Javier Echevarría and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, successor in 1975 to the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá. A professor of fundamental theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, a consultant to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and other pontifical departments, he is also a good tennis player who would like to play almost every day if he had time. And perhaps that is why he rejects so forcefully, like a volley in tennis, those who still associate the Work “with who knows what purpose,” with high finance and political power. “These are dark legends and past falsehoods that time has erased,” the Prelate insists. Opus Dei’s only concern is “to help all mankind make progress, without discrimination, offering the spirit of the Gospel to all men and women.”

You are the fourth Prelate of Opus Dei. Is your Founder’s “presence” in the Work still strong?

Certainly, since it could not be otherwise. St. Josemaría Escrivá is

always among us. He never abandons us. We could speak of a living, tangible, familiar presence. I see many people in Opus Dei seeking advice from the founder’s writings, who ask him for help in times of difficulty, and have recourse to his intercession for their needs. This is reality deeply rooted in the interior life of many people each day, including those who perhaps don’t even know about Opus Dei but have a devotion to St. Josemaría. His mortal remains are here, in the central offices of Opus Dei in Rome, in Our Lady of Peace, the prelatic church, and thousands of people from all over the world come to express their gratitude or their concerns in the silence of prayer.

Can it be said, then, that more than 45 years after his death in Rome on June 26, 1975, St. Josemaría Escrivá is still at the head of the Work, even at this turbulent beginning of the third millennium?

We are all trying to continue the spirit that he left us, and that he in turn received from our Lord: seeking God in the midst of the daily commitments of family life, work, prayer, friendship, service and rest. The challenge is to try to make this effort always up-to-date, in different times and places.

But what are you in particular doing to bring Opus Dei closer to ordinary people and to eliminate the residual prejudices that, rightly or wrongly, see the Work as more “attentive” to the powerful?

Opus Dei is attentive to the spiritual needs of everyone. That “black legend” is a thing of the past. For example, in Italy, in Rome, one of the initiatives promoted since the seventies is the Elis Center, which seeks to give an opportunity for professional formation and social inclusion to young migrants and young people from southern Italy who otherwise would not have this possibility. Moreover, in its formative activities it seeks to foster professionalism as a service to the common good and to other men and women. And, according to statistics, the young people who are trained at the Elis Center are usually successful in finding employment. This is our path.

And in Rome there is also the Campus Bio-Medico, which in a few years has established a prestigious Faculty of Medicine together with a hospital and rehabilitation centers. Like the University of Navarra in Spain, with all the academic specializations.

That’s right. And in many other parts of the world the people of Opus Dei, together with many other people, promote many initiatives of this kind, expressly aimed at helping poor farmers, immigrants, those who have lost everything, to respond to the needs of their neighborhood or town. I can think of two initiatives in the Raval district of Barcelona, which have already assisted about 20,000 immigrants: the Braval and Terral Centers, with more than 300 vol-

unteers, involved in educational, sports and professional training programs. In Cologne, Germany, I was able to meet with the volunteers and priests in the parish of St. Pantaleon, where the diocese and municipality helped in the construction of a center for 30 refugee families fleeing the Syrian conflict. Thanks be to God, this type of institution has sprung up everywhere. If one asks about Opus Dei in Kinshasa, in the third poorest country in the world, many people could talk about how they were received affectionately at the Monkole Hospital, started by faithful of the Prelature with the help of other people.

You are speaking here about educational and health initiatives. But on the spiritual level, what does the Work do?

The effort to care for the spirit by Opus Dei is also of primary importance. Along with constant concern for the needy and migrants in hospitals and specialized care centers, for academic and work training, we should not forget the importance of bringing the Gospel to every person, not just to a part of the population. The Work tries to bring God’s Word to all men and women, both poor and rich. And here, the evangelization of business people, politicians, journalists and others with economic resources is of great importance for the Church’s social doctrine to become a reality in practice, as St. Josemaría Escrivá taught.