

Harambee 2002 is an example of what I have just emphasized. It is the Africans themselves who have to be the key force in Africa's advancement. And education is indispensable for human development, since it opens the doors to work and to both material and spiritual progress. Education is a path, if I may use the expression, to sow hope. The Harambee 2002 project wants to make a small contribution to this immense collective effort.

In this context, it seems only right that we recall with gratitude the thousands of missionaries who for centuries have dedicated themselves generously to educational activities, spending their whole lives in service to others. How great has been their love for Africa, and how greatly the Africans love them!

3. *How will the southern hemisphere be present at the canonization on October 6?*

I am very happy to say that the southern hemisphere will have a substantial presence there. People are coming to Rome from 84 countries—many of them from Africa, after making great sacrifices. I know of people who have tightened their belts for a long time to be able to pay for the trip. There will be a number of African choirs represented in St. Peter's Square on October 6.

But most of the people from countries in the southern hemisphere who want to come, cannot do so. Thus the Organizing Committee for the Canonization is doing everything possible for those who

could not come. Thanks to the inestimable help of the Vatican, of Italian institutions, and of the media, in many countries of the world millions of people will be able to follow the ceremony on television, by radio and Internet. I would like to take this opportunity to express my wholehearted gratitude for the generous help of so many people, also on behalf of those who are far away and will not have an opportunity to express their own gratitude. It is impossible to mention all of them here, because the list would be too long. But I can give them my assurance that I am praying for every one of them.

Corriere della Sera October 5, 2002

Interview with Luigi Accattoli published in this Milanese newspaper, on the eve of the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei

1. *The Church is about to proclaim the holiness of your Founder to the entire Church. Aside from obvious advantages, isn't there a danger of falling into triumphalism and self-congratulation?*

I don't believe that any such danger exists, because canonizing the founder of Opus Dei is clearly not the same as canonizing the faithful of the Prelature. Moreover, the contrast between Josemaría Escrivá's sanctity and the reality of the personal life of each one of us will now be more evident, and this will spur us to strive to overcome our own defects. I have been a member of Opus Dei since

1948, and it has always been brought home to me that the life of a Christian is one of conversion.

2. *What significance will Escrivá have now, outside of Opus Dei?*

A short while ago, a German Cardinal said that the canonization meant the “deprivatization” of Josemaría Escrivá, who from now on belongs to the entire Church. The teachings of this priest on the sanctification of work and ordinary life have already spread far beyond the confines of the prelature. They belong to the entire Church, as Pope Paul VI, of venerable memory, told my predecessor when he received him for the first time. And this has meant for many people the rediscovery of the joy of being Christians in the middle of the world.

3. *And outside the Church? That is, for the world?*

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá insisted that the world was not foreign to religion, or opposed to spiritual realities. He used to say that “the world is good, because it has come forth from God’s hands.” And he encouraged people to become “contemplatives in the middle of the world.” He loved the world passionately, without being naive or falling into worldliness. He wanted to properly value everything in this world of ours, both what is positive and what is negative. Thus the Christian, to use an analogy from sports, is always “playing on his home field.” He never feels that he is an “outsider” in the world, and therefore forced to be on the defensive. And he finds

innumerable points of contact with all men and women of good will who, even without having received the gift of faith, share many of his own human and social values. The cross of Christ, Escrivá used to say, is the “plus sign” in the world. It unites, rather than separates.

4. *The cause for Padre Pio’s canonization lasted 19 years, that of your founder barely two years longer. These have been the most rapid canonizations in recent times. But one might claim that Padre Pio became a saint by popular acclamation. How did Msgr. Escrivá’s “reputation for sanctity” manifest itself?*

In a very normal way. As an expression of the faith and the prayers of ordinary people, who sought out Josemaría Escrivá’s help, perhaps quietly, asking God for a spiritual conversion, for the cure of an illness, or for a job to support their family.

During these years the office of postulation received medical documentation on 48 unexplainable cures. But in my view, even more significant than these were the more than 100,000 “ordinary” favors reported, which were equally real. It is not for nothing that Josemaría Escrivá preached untiringly about the value of ordinary life. In any case, I am sure that many of those who sought out Josemaría Escrivá’s intercession had also sought the help of the holy friar from Pietrelcina, and vice versa.

5. *Opus Dei stresses its Founder’s modernity. Nevertheless, The Way contains this maxim: “When a layman*

sets himself up as an expert on morals he often goes astray: laymen can only be disciples.” How do you explain this?

I don't know if you are familiar with the critical edition of *The Way* that was recently published. There it explains that this point was written by Josemaría Escrivá in 1931, when he was 29, and that he was following an idea of his spiritual director. Certainly, in those days, moral theology was closely linked to sacramental confession, and therefore, to confessors. This is the context in which that point should be interpreted.

On the other hand, the author of *The Way* is the same person who throughout his life made it possible for thousands of lay people, both men and women, to study dogmatic, moral, and spiritual theology at a rigorous level.

6. If you could preserve only one of Escrivá's maxims, which would you choose?

You are really putting me on the spot—the dilemma of choosing! I have never even considered that question, nor will I spend much time thinking about it now, since I think all of them are useful and valid. I will tell you the first thing that comes to mind: “A saying of a soul of prayer: in intentions, may Jesus be our aim; in affections, our Love; in conversation, our theme; in actions, our model.”

7. At this moment the Work is rejoicing. But there is a time to rejoice and a time to do penance. When the Pope invited the “children” of the Church to

publicly acknowledge their sins, did the children of Escrivá find anything to criticize in themselves?

This certainly is a moment of rejoicing for the faithful of the Prelature, but not of exaltation. As I said before, the canonization has enkindled in us the desire for conversion, seeking to be more generous with God and with all men and women.

The faithful of Opus Dei have taken deeply to heart, as I am sure the rest of the Church has also done, John Paul II's invitation to ask others for forgiveness. Moreover, following Blessed Escrivá's advice, we try to understand this petition for forgiveness not as something extraordinary or exceptional, just as our mistakes unfortunately are not very exceptional either. Self-criticism is not reserved for only a few special moments. Therefore, and I want to speak now in the first person, I try to ask for forgiveness every day, for my offenses against God and against others, especially those around me. The ability to recognize one's own mistakes goes hand in hand with the ability to forgive, which the Pope is continually urging all Christians to foster. The sacrament of Confession is an essential part of the life of the Church, and is given great importance in the spirit of Opus Dei. It is impossible to attain this ability to forgive without a sincere repentance for one's own fault. Can there be a greater self-critique than this?

Besides asking for forgiveness for the sins others have committed, we do much good to the Church by

asking for forgiveness every day for our own faults and forgiving others whenever necessary. Thus no one in the future will have to ask for forgiveness for our own blindness or hardness of heart.

*L'Osservatore
Romano*
October 6, 2002

"Contemplation in the midst of the world," article published in the special edition of the Vatican newspaper

Saint Josemaría Escrivá: As soon as the canonization takes place, it will be very moving to put the adjective "Saint" for the first time in front of the name of the person to whom I owe more than anyone else on earth. Our Lord granted me the grace of being a witness to his holy life, day after day, for twenty-five years.

Among the characteristics that best describe Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, I would like to consider here just one: "unity of life." Spiritual theology employs this expression to describe the ideal, found in so many of the Fathers of the Church, of uniting the examples of both Martha and Mary, fusing action and contemplation, prayer and work. I use the term "work" here in a broad sense, including professional, family and civic duties. Unity of life stems from the Holy Spirit's action in a soul. It is much more than a purely human goal, the result of an ordered mind or efficient organization. In a certain

sense, it is a synonym for holiness, and therefore, a goal for all Christians.

The apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* underlines its importance in the context of the sanctification of ordinary life (see no. 17). It is only when our daily duties are lived in the light of such unity that they reveal themselves as so many occasions for union with God, as transfigured by grace. However, when we let ourselves be absorbed by the horizontal dimension of life, our daily activity leads to dispersion (among other reasons, because of the rhythm imposed by the very tasks that make it up). We find ourselves overcome by hurry and distraction, by the urgent need to find solutions to problems so pressing that they leave no space for other thoughts. The duties of the workplace try to rob time from family life. The standards of a consumer society seek to extinguish an ideal that calls for austerity and sacrifice. Economic needs absorb all of one's energies to the detriment of higher duties. Thus man's heart, exposed to such formidable pressures, runs the risk of being torn to pieces. On the contrary, when unity of life is present, the tensions to which we are exposed every day are brought into harmony, leaving our heart free to seek God.

To live alongside Josemaría Escrivá was for me a constant lesson in unity of life. All of his gestures and words and undertakings were explicitly directed towards God. They were born of faith and nourished by hope in God's help, seeking