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God, rock and a violin

Manuel Lamberti is from Puerto La Cruz in Venezuela. He is 19 years old, studies violin and plays in a rock band. For two years, he was the first violin of the Youth Orchestra of the State of Anzoátegui. He is a numerary member of Opus Dei.

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How has Opus Dei helped you?

Everything that St. Josemaría said about work has helped me a lot.

Before meeting Opus Dei, practicing the violin for three hours was something difficult for me. It cost me a lot. And yes, of course, it's still tough, but when you know that you can supernaturalize those three hours of violin and offer them to God, everything becomes much more bearable, so to say, because you know that you're not only benefiting from it in this life, because you are going to become a good musician, but also in the next.

Can one find God in music? Can God be in music?

In my case, when I interpret an important work, which somehow moves me, I immediately say to myself "God must have inspired the composer."

So playing the violin brings you closer to God?

Yes. When I supernaturalize my work, when I offer my hours of study and my hours of class in the university to God. Once one knows the spirit of Opus Dei one learns to give another meaning to things. For example I found it very difficult to have to spend hours of aural training, and if I had the choice I would never have gone there, but, in contrast, now I say “all right, let’s offer up these hours of class” and thus I end up enjoying it.

But what do you mean by “supernaturalizing work”?

Well, when you are very near to a concert or a recital, you always have the danger of getting wrapped up in studying to succeed in the matter and forget that in the end it is for God and that really it is God who will help you to do it well. So then when I am studying, at times I put a crucifix on the music stand, or a picture, to keep

myself in the presence of my Father, God. Obviously, this does not come easy; it's a struggle.

Also, many times it happens that the things do not go as you wish: at times you can practice a great deal and still do badly in the concert. Then is when you remember again that the work is really for God, and that if your work was done with love, the result is not that important, even if it was a disaster, and this helps you not to become discouraged.

And now you are in a well-known rock group . . .

Yes, the truth is that we've been having success, we are heard quite a bit on the radio and we have a number of concerts during the year. People are surprised because they believe that struggling to be a good Catholic is not compatible with that profession. Strangely enough, some of my friends have become

interested in Opus Dei just for that reason, because they realize that one doesn't necessarily have to be closed up in a monastery to be a good Catholic.

I understand that, between interviews with the media, at times things happen . . .

There have been times, especially when we are promoting some record, that we have many interviews with the media on the same day . . . and noontime comes around when we are in the car; then we stop playing and ask the manager if he would like to pray the Angelus with us. . . I think that the first time he was rather surprised, but now he knows about it and has no problem. Those things help us to keep aware of the presence of God during the day.

Is it true that musicians are absent-minded?

Well, in my case, yes. Ever since I was a small boy I have tended to leave things around. I am always forgetting my cell-phone, the scores . . . But it is a struggle and as such I try to offer it to God for other people: so that someone be cured of a sickness, or whatever.

A while ago you told me that St. Josemaría did you a big favor in connection with your violin.

The story about the violin is this: One time I went to a special class in a well-known hotel in Caracas with a professor who had come from Germany. I went there by subway and arrived very early; I decided to study until the class began. But before this I wanted to wash my hands and so I left the violin in one of the sitting rooms while I went into the bathroom and . . . when I returned, it wasn't there: it had been stolen.

It's a very good violin which cost several thousand dollars - the tools of my trade. And so I asked for help from all of the security people of the orchestra and the hotel, but to no avail. My family and I started to ask St. Josemaría to find the violin. A month went by. My friends told me that I should accept the loss and look for another one, but we continued to pray.

The time went by until one fine day a fellow violinist said to me: "Manuel, my professor said he thinks he knows where your violin is. A new student came to his class with it." We went to see him and there it was. It was my violin. It had been sold to this student at a very low price. We paid him for it and got the violin back more than a month after it was lost. I owe this to St. Josemaría. And so, afterwards, in gratitude, I've been able to give out many St. Josemaría

prayer cards, saying “Hey, this is the saint who got my violin back for me!”

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