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# Opus Dei is not a lobby group

In response to an article published on Oct. 29 in Le Devoir, Opus Dei offers some important clarifications published, in turn, on Nov. 1st in Le Devoir.

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The article “Dying with dignity - the discrete influence of Opus Dei” (Mourir dans la dignité - l’influence discrète de l’Opus Dei) published on October 29 in Le Devoir

reflects an uneasiness which I would like to address and clarify.

The questions raised in this article touch on secularity, personal autonomy, freedom of conscience and respect of privacy.

To begin, Opus Dei is a lay institution of the Catholic Church. Therefore, lay persons are its members. They receive education in the Catholic faith on the intellectual and spiritual levels from Opus Dei. Each member then thinks and reflects on what the faith means for them. The institution exists to equip its members to live the faith as individuals, according to their personality. Members would not accept to be told what to think, nor how to act or not act. If this was the case, nobody would want to be a member, which is not the case.

Emphasis is given especially on personal responsibility when we speak of formation in Opus Dei.

Nobody is told what to do, nor can tell anyone else what political stripe or type of social or cultural action anyone should take. This explains why no member can take it upon themselves to represent Opus Dei, because as an institution, it has no other line of action than to help Christians to be fully coherent with their faith by living it in their everyday life. The only person who can speak on behalf of Opus Dei is its Prelate and Vicars in the different countries or regions where Opus Dei is active, either directly or through their spokespersons.

When we come to a subject that touches on natural law and therefore the Judeo-Christian moral code, it is neither Opus Dei that indicates to its members how to think or what to do but rather the teaching of the Catholic Church, clearly explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (updated and published by Pope John

Paul II in 1992). Opus Dei members, like many other Catholics, freely and consciously espouse these teachings with personal responsibility.

Opus Dei is criticized for not releasing its list of members and arising from that, the accusation of being a secret association. Individual members are completely free to make known their belonging to Opus Dei to whomever they want. Not releasing the membership list is done out of respect for the privacy of each member. It should not be hard to understand this way of acting as it is common practice in many professional and cultural associations. For instance, no physician would release their patient list to a journalist or anyone who would call their office for this information. This is simply common sense.

There is no hidden agenda behind this way of acting except the conviction that one's faith is part of one's private life and that each person should be able to speak about it in the way and the circumstances that they judge appropriate.

Members are happy to speak about belonging to Opus Dei with the persons with whom they have a personal relationship.

Now let's return to the article and the uneasiness raised by the subject of physicians who made submissions to the Parliamentary Commission.

Should they have made known their Opus Dei membership if such a membership existed? No. They did not speak as representatives of Opus Dei as they are not in a position to do so as explained above.

To put this into perspective, let's ask the following question: Should a Jew have to reveal their religion and

their membership to a specific synagogue? Should a Protestant have to say to which branch they belong? Should a Catholic have to say if they belong to Focolari, Communion and Liberation, the Knights of Malta, the Knights of Columbus, the Order of the Holy Sepulcher, the Legion of Mary or the Emmanuel Community? Should they begin their presentation to the National Assembly with such an introduction? The answer is obvious.

Therefore, why should a Catholic mention that they are a member of Opus Dei? To take it even further, should an atheist have to begin a presentation to a Parliamentary Commission on euthanasia by noting this position?

At the heart of this question is the fear that religious convictions colour one's position. Following this logic, only atheists would have full right to

enter a public debate. Nevertheless, their position is also reflected in their understanding of the human person. Complete neutrality is an ideological construction and an illusion. Obviously, each person brings their personal

baggage resulting from their education, values, readings, etc.

Opus Dei has an exclusively spiritual objective. It is neither a pressure group nor a lobby. If it was, journalists would be correct to denounce its members lacking in transparency. But as it is not, it is normal that Opus Dei members did not have to put forth their membership before speaking.

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