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# Symposium on Work and Human Values in Sydney

Some sixty people from a wide range of professions participated in a symposium organized by Warrane College to mark the first centenary of the founder of Opus Dei, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá.

09/09/2002

Warrane College is a men's residential college at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. A

corporate work of Opus Dei, its foundation in the early 1970s was inspired by Blessed Josemaría, who took a keen interest in its development.

The symposium was held on August 24 at the university's conference center, The Scientia, on the topic "Work and Human Values."

It was led by Dr. Jess Estanislao, the former Philippines Secretary of Finance who now heads the Philippines' President's Governance Advisory Council, and Dr. Carlos Cavallé, a professor from IESE, one of the world's leading business schools in Spain.

Other participants included the Australian Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Mr. Tony Abbott, the Australian National Secretary of the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Mr. Joe de Bruyn, and journalist,

university lecturer and former television newsreader, Katrina Lee.

Dr. Estanislao urged participants to strive to promote equity and fairness in the workplace and marketplace.

"Equity and fairness should be stressed as much as efficiency and effectiveness," he told the symposium.

He also emphasized the importance of sustainability as countries continued to forge a global community. Pointing out that the world's population would grow from 6 billion to 9 billion over the next 50 years, he said that 60 per cent of this population increase would take place in Asia. However, many Asian countries were among the world's poorest nations. Four per cent of the world's population were enjoying 80 per cent of the world's GDP while billions of people were living on an average of \$4 per day.

Part of the reason why sustainability was not being considered adequately today was that electoral politics tended to promote a short-term perspective. At the same time corporations tended to be preoccupied with short-term speculation.

Broader concerns needed to be promoted, along with wider social responsibility, fairness, objectivity and high standards of disclosure. "Ethics and sustainability are among the most fundamental demands today in the global community," Dr. Estanislao said.

He pointed out that Blessed Josemaría's encouragement for all people to seek perfection in their work and all their social relations provided a strong basis for solving problems being encountered in the workplace.

## **Transforming business and the common good**

Dr. Cavallé spoke on "Transforming Business and the Common Good." He said that it was critical for all people to strive to carry out their work with professional competence and with an attitude of service to others. He said it was also critical to take very seriously the importance of a spirit of solidarity and charity that goes beyond the strict requirements of justice.

Drawing attention to the teachings of Blessed Josemaría, Dr Cavallé said: "Professional work done with personal competence and with an attitude of service is a necessary condition for personal improvement and union with God....

"Work structures become dignified when they facilitate the attitude towards service, stimulate the perfection of personal capacities and

lead to the necessary level of professional competence."

Expanding on this theme, Dr. Cavallé quoted from the words of Blessed Josemaría in a homily published in the book *Christ is Passing By* at point 98: "Being a Christian is not something incidental; it is a divine reality that takes root deep in our life. It gives us a clear vision and strengthens our will to act as God wants. So we learn that the Christian's pilgrimage in the world must express itself in a continuous service in all kinds of ways, varying with each person's circumstances, but always motivated by love of God and of our neighbour."

Participants of the symposium took part in three separate discussion groups which looked at the topics: "People and Work," "Balancing Work and Family," and "Work and Personal Development."

Those who took part included Special Counsel of Pricewaterhouse-Coopers, Mrs. Louise Brosnan, Chancellor of Bond University (Gold Coast), Mrs. Imelda Roche, Pro Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, Dr. Jessica Milner Davis, columnist with The Australian newspaper, Mrs. Angela Shannahan, the Deputy President of the Australian Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Mr. Justice Ron Purvis, and a Board member of the PARED Foundation (which has founded several schools in Sydney), Mrs. Virginia Monagle.

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