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Interest in Religion is Growing - Czech Republic

Fr. Jean-Philippe Huet is an Opus Dei priest who lives in the Czech Republic. In this interview, he speaks about his pastoral work and the hopes of the Church before the visit of Benedict XVI last October.

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You have lived in Prague for five years. What brought you here?

Seven years of study and preparation for the priesthood in Rome helped broaden my horizons. When I was ordained priest in 2002, I told the Prelate of Opus Dei that if the Work needed, I would be glad to go to Russia, Vietnam or any other country where there are few priests.

However, I returned to Paris, where I spent a year until they asked me if I could move to the Czech Republic to develop my pastoral work as a priest Opus Dei. At first, I admit, I was surprised at the proposal, but immediately I said yes.

And what were your first impressions, especially where the life of the Church is concerned? I was told that communism had deeply lacerated the Czech Republic, precisely because it was a country of great Catholic tradition. This is still visible in the architecture: those who know Prague will have seen the frescoes on the Holy Trinity, the

images of the Blessed Virgin in the streets... The communist did not destroy the art but the Christian formation of its people. Today, 25% of the population is Catholic, compared to 80% in 1948. But, the Church is not criticized so much as in other places, like France, for example. Among young people, religious ignorance is quite notable, but the future is very promising because interest in religion is steadily growing.

Can you briefly tell us about the apostolic work of Opus Dei in the Czech Republic? How has the message of sanctification of work been received?

That interest for God is noticeable in the apostolic work carried out by Opus Dei here. The Czechs are serious workers. In fact, many international companies have opened an office here not only

because labor is cheaper, but because they know that they work hard. St. Josemaría said that spiritual struggle requires human virtues. Without them, the life of grace can hardly grow and develop. With God's grace, we are seeing conversions, and the people who attend the spiritual activities we offer are discovering their vocations, not only to the Work but also to religious life and to the seminary.

What do you expect from the Holy Father's trip to the country?

We eagerly await the Pope's arrival in Bohemia and Moravia. His visit will be a wonderful boost for those of the Church in this land that was converted to Christianity by Saints Cyril and Methodius. Please pray for the fruits of his journey, which commemorates the 1080th anniversary of the death of our Patron, Saint Wenceslas, who was

murdered by his brother about 30 kilometers from Prague.

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