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Strathmore University's 10th Anniversary

An interview with the Prelate of Opus Dei, who is Chancellor of Strathmore University in Kenya, that was published for the 10th anniversary of the University's charter.

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What was the vision of Saint Josemaria for Africa and specifically Kenya when he sent the first members of Opus Dei who

started the Strathmore A Level College in 1961?

Kenya was the first country in Africa to receive faithful of Opus Dei in 1958. That is why Saint Josemaría always looked at your nation with great affection. He prayed a lot for Kenyans and for Strathmore. He hoped that his daughters and sons, who had arrived there to carry out their professional work, would become good citizens of the land that had welcomed them. He wanted Strathmore College to be interracial: in the management team, in the faculty and in the student body. “Because there is only one race,” he liked to say, “the race of the children of God.” That is why Strathmore is, in a way, a place where one has to learn to live like this, as children of God.

What are your expectations of Strathmore University on this

occasion of celebrating 10 years since it was awarded its charter?

I hope that this anniversary will be an opportunity to open up to a yearning for truth. It is an attitude very much in keeping with the university spirit and is what Saint Josemaría wanted – and later Don Alvaro and Don Javier – for people who work in this field. Openness to the whole world, eager to serve and share the best you have.

Strathmore's charter was awarded in 2008, at a time when Kenya was greatly divided after the 2007 post-election violence in the country.

What is your take on the University's Christian orientation and foundational values that are emphatic on charity and unity as clearly spelt in the motto 'Ut omnes unum sint'?

Unity is not improvised. It is an asset, a great good based on the willingness

to help others and avoid making a big deal about our differences, no matter what they are. This motto, therefore, is a basis for further work and also the horizon to be reached. Unity is a daily conquest: a struggle to appreciate and respect differences and to know how to ask for forgiveness. And at the University, people are taught how to build society on this foundation. Pope Francis, on his visit to Kenya, encouraged people to work with integrity and transparency for the common good, to say no to corruption and to foster a spirit of solidarity in all areas of society and especially with those most in need. Difficulties, for a Christian, are rather challenges, because we always have the grace of God and the encouragement to contribute to improving relationships between people, even if we take our own limitations as our starting point.

In following the message of Saint Josemaria on the universal call to holiness while carrying out ordinary work, what is your advice to various cadres of staff working in the University to foster excellent work and uphold high human standards at all times?

The very history of Strathmore University can be a source of inspiration: over the years it has grown from a small academic institution to a university. The stature of the university depends on your commitment to try to work hard and to work well, to carry out each task with human perfection and with love of God. In that sense, the key lies in the heart of every teacher, every employee, every student and every manager. By fostering an effective desire to help others and to find God in this very ordinary work, their work – whatever it may be – is always relevant. This is where the

importance of love in work comes from. It is something simple and, at the same time, supernatural.

Technological advancement has spread rapidly in the world, in Africa and Kenya is not left behind; what words of advice would you give to;

A. Students who need to balance between being tech savvy and being truly human

I would tell them not to be afraid to exercise their freedom in projects that are worthwhile. Technologies contribute a great deal to life, but you also need to “disconnect” in order to interact, face to face, with others. On the other hand, the future of the country and, perhaps, of other nations, depends on the students who are now being trained.

B. Lecturers who use technology to teach & carry out research and

should guide the youth on cultivating meaningful relationships at the family and social level?

Technical means contribute to improved performance in research work. At the same time, they are just means, that is, instruments that allow us to reach an end. Therefore, a good professional tries to use them with measure so they do not distance him or her from others. The consequence of this attitude is the positive influence of the lecturers in the rest of the university: their example mainly influences the students, who will be the leaders of society in a few years

C. How does one find God in the noise of social media?

You can learn to communicate with God in many ways. It is enough to go to the chapel, or to spend some time every day praying with the Gospel. A

necessary mode of “access” is the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist. With the power of God’s grace, we work and live in the company of the Lord amidst the noise of the factory, the classrooms, the streets or the paths of the countryside.

Saint Josemaria loved working with the disadvantaged and marginalized in society. What insights would you give to those working on projects in Community Outreach for more effectiveness? What role does the University play in bringing about development to the economy of our country?

“Opus Dei grew up,” Saint Josemaría often said, “in the poor neighborhoods of Madrid,” because in the sicknesses and sufferings of others he found the strength of God. The priority of the individual moves Christians to take an interest in each

person. The Pope recalled – for example in the last Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate*– the need to live with understanding, affection and true attention for those around us, inviting them to live the teaching found at the end of chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew. It is about seeing Christ in others. The initiatives to help the needy, which are promoted in Strathmore, are a concrete way of trying to live like this.

Looking ahead to the future with the foundational years behind us, what is most important contribution you expect Strathmore to make in this region and in Africa?

A university of Christian inspiration contains the potential remedy that society needs: human values, the will to contribute to the needs of the country and to culture, training the

professionals of the future. And, above and beyond that, a place where, within the personal limitations of each one of us, we try to give every student, every person who works here, the opportunity to feel very free and very responsible. Many great things depend on their lives and on the good they actually do around them, for others and for God.

Link to Strathmore University website

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