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"One can find God even on Wall Street."

The Prelate of Opus Dei is interviewed in the Italian periodical, Il Sole 24 Ore.

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Sanctification of work is a main component of Opus Dei's message?

Work is understood to be positive, something good. Our Founder taught us that we can recognize God's presence not only in natural phenomena, but also in the way we work, in the effort we make.

So seeking perfection in work is characteristic of Opus Dei members?

If work is a place where we can meet God, it has to be done as well as possible, with professional competence. The degree of sanctity is not determined by the kind of work one does, nor by its social standing or its monetary reward.

What about the unemployed?

It is important to help them--especially the young--to acquire the skills they need to render a service to society. As one example, Opus Dei operates a trade school in Rome (Centro ELIS) in a working class district where young people are trained. At this point, more than ten thousand of its graduates are employed.

How could someone who works in finance where speculation is common find a way to sanctity?

Sometimes we still encounter the old prejudice that such jobs are necessarily negative or dangerous for Christians. But if someone working in high finance and market transactions practices this work honestly and sees it as a service to others, it can become an occasion for giving glory to God. So yes, one can find God even on Wall Street.

Then even speculation can be a path toward God?

It cannot be used to practice injustice toward persons; a sound ethical context is necessary. But according to the teachings of Jesus, business executives are entitled to the fruits of their talents.

Most executives never seem to think about making their talents

bear fruit when they engage in trade...

Sometimes acting uprightly in the world of business requires heroism. A person with an upright conscience must confront unjust practices that are morally unacceptable. In fact, sanctity is itself heroic. We are all called to sanctity, and so everyone is capable, with God's help, to make "heroic" decisions when circumstances require it.

Are members of Opus Dei given some special guidance in these matters?

They receive no guidance on how to exercise their professional work. What they do receive is Christian formation that gives them a deep moral awareness. It moves them to grow, to improve. In other words, Opus Dei helps them to cultivate the virtues and seek holiness--to be honest, loyal, hard working, and

understanding, to give and take, and to learn from their mistakes to ask for pardon.

Why is it often said that Opus Dei is powerful, especially in finance and business?

This got started when some people wanted to harm our work. There are some influential persons in Opus Dei, but most members are ordinary people who work in all fields. They, however, don't make news.

Then there are no secret agreements or business compacts in Opus Dei?

If there were such things, the members themselves would be the first to reject them. St. Josemaria often said that he wanted to leave his spiritual children a legacy of love for freedom and of good humor. One can say that he did that.

In their work, then, the members of Opus Dei do not form a network but each one goes his own way?

Absolutely. It often happens that persons in Opus Dei even go in opposing directions as they try to find the best way to make their profession contribute to the good of society. Each one is responsible for his or her own actions, whether they succeed or fail.

So ethics is at the heart of the sanctification of work?

That's right; to consider work only from a technical point of view, to look only at its specific practical aspects would be to cheapen it. As a human action, work necessarily has an impact on each worker's personality; it makes the person better or worse because it derives its value from a higher order, an ethical dimension that goes beyond technical considerations.

Is morality individual or corporate?

When I say that ethics makes individuals more perfect I do not mean to imply individualism.

Everyone agrees that exercising a profession at a high moral level will contribute to the common good.

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