

El Mundo Interview with Charlie Cox

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As we look forward to the release of *There be Dragons* in the United States, the movie has already become the second most viewed movie this year in Spain. Behind the untouchable *Torrente*, this story related to the founder of the Work has already taken in 1.6M Euros. The protagonist, Charlie Cox (London, b. 1982) speaks to EL MUNDO during a break in his work. “Until yesterday I was filming in the United States for a series produced by Martin Scorsese

called *Boardwalk Empire* , about the Mafia in New York in the 1930's.”

Q. You probably know that the movie is stirring up many "dragons" in the media in Spain.

A. I didn't know that, but it doesn't surprise me given the amount of warnings I received when I accepted the role of St. Josemaría.

Q. Did you know anything about Opus Dei and Escrivá de Balaguer before doing this film?

A. No. I had only heard the name connected with *The Da Vinci Code* , and as for Josemaría, I had never even heard of him; he was totally unknown to me.

Q. What made you accept this project?

A. It seemed very interesting to me. As I was saying, I had no opinion

about Opus Dei or about Josemaría . The script portrayed Josemaría Escrivá in a positive light, and yet I found many people who had very strong reactions against Opus Dei. I'm talking about family and friends who warned me: "Be careful with these people," but then did not give me any convincing arguments. This made me curious: why did so many people have preconceived ideas about this institution? And so I decided to inquire, to discover for myself with an open mind what it was. I wanted to form my own opinion and so I started reading a lot, meeting people, going to Opus Dei centers. And I found that many of the things I heard were either false or exaggerated. My experience so far has been entirely positive.

Q. What is it that most attracted you to this character?

A. A person who had known Josemaría said to me: "I hope you can find his strength, his energy." That phrase became the basis of my interpretation. Josemaría was a person with a great capacity to love people, and at the same time he was tremendously authentic. In the videos that I saw, I discovered that he didn't hesitate to say what he thought about how a Christian ought to live.

Q. The atmosphere when you were shooting the film – a drama with religious themes – I suppose it was different from a comedy.

A. Obviously, yes. All films are made to entertain, but some have more importance and a greater depth, and I think *There Be Dragons* is one of those. Personally, during the filming, I felt a great responsibility. Many times I looked at a photograph of the ceremony of St. Josemaría's canonization with St. Peter's Square

in Rome filled with nearly half a million people, and I felt the weight of playing someone very important, and I wanted to represent him properly. The whole thing was a challenge for me.

Q. As was the case for *The Mission* where a Jesuit served as special consultant on some matters, while shooting this film there was a priest of Opus Dei on the set. Wasn't his presence a bit intimidating?

A. Yes, definitely. I have to confess that when I came to Rome to meet Father John Wauck, I was intimidated. I was expecting a man who was hard, rigid, even someone who would make you afraid. What I have now is a great friendship with one of the most open-minded men I have ever met. All of us actors immediately forgot that there was a priest sitting there with us, and at times the conversations were a little

inappropriate. I would glance over at Father John after someone had something that could be a little offensive, and I saw him laughing harder than anyone else. He is a wonderful man.

Q. After this film, do you pray to Saint Josemaría?

A. Yes. I have the impression that now I have a special bond with him. Just yesterday, before leaving the hotel, I looked at his picture on the little prayer card. I looked at him and I said a few words to him. I think he will help me.

Q. One of your companions in the filming, Wes Bentley, said that success is a dangerous “dragon” for young actors. How can you fight it?

A. Someone once told me: “An actor should have an extraordinary career and an ordinary life.” I have been lucky because my career has been

relatively slow. I struggle to maintain a home life and always come back to my roots, to my family, to my old friends. If they are taking pictures of you at dawn coming out of the night clubs and discos, then you are already in trouble.

Q. How was your experience doing a film with Roland Joffe?

A. Wonderful. Roland is a director in the purest sense of the word. He protects each person's creative process so much that for an actor who works with him each day is a dream.

Q. And speaking of dreams, what is your dream as an actor?

A. First I'll tell you my nightmare, my "dragons." It scares me to think that maybe one day I'll have to stop doing what I'm doing now and which I like so much. My dream is simply to be

able to continue acting, so I feel like I am the luckiest man in the world.

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