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Msgr. Ocariz: the Gospel is the answer to the thirst for authenticity many young people feel

An English translation of the interview with Monsignor Fernando Ocariz by Francesco Ognibene (Avvenire), originally in Italian.

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1. The founder of Opus Dei, Josemaría Escrivá, completed his

earthly journey on 26 June 1975, fifty years ago. How is his message still relevant today?

Saint Josemaría's message retains a special vitality today: the universal call to holiness in one's work, in service to society, and within the family – the little domestic Church, as Saint Paul VI liked to say. In a world that tends to separate the sacred from everyday life, his message remains radical and profoundly Christian: every form of work, every family commitment, every little joy or sorrow lived with love becomes an opportunity to encounter God. This call to sanctify the present moment, with realism and hope, is more relevant than ever.

2. The recent General Congress, an important event for Opus Dei, coincided with the days in which the Church welcomed a new Pope.

What reflections has this coincidence prompted for you?

On the one hand, there was the sorrow over the death of Pope Francis. On the other, a shared sense of waiting that united us with the whole Church in prayer and openness. The coincidence of the two dates reminded us how deeply our lay identity is rooted in the Church, our Mother. The election of a new Pope is always a moment of grace and responsibility, an invitation for each of us to renew our fidelity to Christ through the successor of Peter. I was struck by the joy of so many people the moment the white smoke appeared, an hour before the Pope's identity was revealed: celebrating already having a common father, whoever he might be.

3. A few days after the election of the Pope, Pope Leo XIV received you in an audience. Could you

share something of that conversation?

It was a gesture of fatherly care, during which the Pope expressed his closeness and affection, as a true father of the Church. Among other things, the Holy Father asked for information about the current review of the Prelature's Statutes. Pope Leo XIV listened with great interest to what we had to say. He also made reference to the Marian feasts that coincided with the day of his election. In a familial and trusting atmosphere, he gave his blessing to me and to Msgr. Mariano Fazio (the auxiliary vicar of Opus Dei). It was a source of joy for everyone in Opus Dei.

4. In these early weeks with Pope Leo XIV, we are beginning to see a human and spiritual profile previously unknown to most of the

public. What impresses you most about the Pope?

What strikes me is his inner depth, his serenity, and, if I can express it this way, his naturalness. In a time often marked by haste and noise, the Holy Father seems to preserve a silence filled with God, which is reflected in the way he speaks, listens, and looks: these qualities are great supports in his desire for unity. You sense in him a firm and lived faith, capable of inspiring hope, and a spirit of mercy towards each person, as many testimonies from Chiclayo (the diocese in Peru where he served as bishop before Pope Francis called him to Rome) also attest.

5. What future commitments emerged for the Work during the Congress?

The Congress was held in a spirit of respect for the mourning that

affected the entire Church following the death of Pope Francis. As a result, the sessions were shorter than originally planned. Even so, the members of the General Council and the Central Advisory were appointed, as is customary in such congresses. Beyond the formal sessions, there was an enriching exchange among those who had travelled to Rome from all over the world, reflecting on the contributions gathered from the countries where the Work is present, thanks to the assemblies held in 2024. These assemblies saw the engaged, and I would say enthusiastic, participation of thousands of people. A strong unity of purpose emerged from the assemblies, particularly regarding the commitment to evangelisation in the world of work and a deep love for the Church. Among various suggestions, there was much discussion about the apostolate of the “first proclamation” of the Christian

message; a need that is increasingly urgent in a world that appears more secularised but in which a deep thirst for God is being rediscovered. Saint Josemaría described the Work as a “great catechesis” in the midst of the world, lived out in ordinary life. We ask him for light to continue this mission today with joy and generosity.

The members of the Congress also gave their positive opinion so that, with the new councils, the Prelate could present to the Holy See the version of the Statutes he considered most appropriate, taking the suggestions already received in the 2023 Congress, and the previous consultation with all the faithful of Opus Dei, into account. And this is what happened: once Pope Leo had been elected, on 11 June I presented the proposal to the Dicastery for the Clergy. The next step now lies in the

hands of the authorities of the Apostolic See.

6. In 2028 you will celebrate one hundred years since the foundation. How is Opus Dei changing?

The essential criteria for any change is fidelity to the charism. Cultural and social contexts evolve, and so do the people who embody the message in each generation, but the essence remains: to help each person discover that God is calling them right where they are. The changes we are currently experiencing – including the process of adapting the Statutes – are a stimulus to safeguard what is essential. We wish to be an ever more genuine, close and humble support for everyone in the Church and in society.

7. What is the Work learning from the process of revising the Statutes initiated by Pope Francis?

These years have been marked by a spirit of filial and truly open listening, safeguarding the treasure passed on by Saint Josemaría while looking ahead. Pope Francis has invited us on a path of renewal, which calls for patience and depth. Revising the Statutes is not merely a juridical exercise, but also a spiritual one: it helps us ask what really matters and what best serves people and the mission. It is an opportunity to live the Gospel essence of the charism more deeply.

8. What does a young person find in the path of faith proposed by Opus Dei today?

They discover the possibility that ordinary life, with all its challenges and joys, can be a sure path that leads to God. They also find accompaniment, sincere dialogue in friendship, a family atmosphere, and a call to holiness that is not reserved

for a few “heroes,” but is for everyone. It is an invitation, as Saint Josemaría said, to be “Christians full of optimism and drive who are capable of living out their divine adventure in the world,” and thus to do good and help improve the society around them. Amid today’s uncertainties, many young people are seeking authenticity, and the Gospel, lived out in everyday life, offers a profound response to that thirst.

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