Interview with Msgr José Luis Illanes about the journal "Studia et Documenta"

2007.1.26

The “St Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute” in Rome (ISJE) is now launching a specialized annual journal entitled Studia et Documenta. In addition to gathering studies in history, theology, jurisprudence, sociology and related fields, the journal has a selection of texts written by St Josemaría himself, including some previously unpublished. It also provides information about conferences etc. on Saint Josemaría Escrivá and his work, as well as news of books and other publications connected with him.

The following is the transcript of an interview with Msgr. José Luis Illanes, Director of the ISJE.

Q: Why is there a need for a historical journal about St Josemaría Escrivá and Opus Dei?
Illanes: St Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, and his message about the universal call to holiness, the sanctification of work, and the human and Christian value of ordinary everyday things, have attracted attention both in the media and in academic circles – especially those related to the history of Christianity and the analysis of the effects of Christianity on culture.
That much is evident from the number of solid, well-documented biographies of St Josemaría published in the last few decades, as well as papers and articles on his thought and his spirituality. Studies have also been published, though fewer, of the history and apostolic activity of the institution that he founded, Opus Dei.
All this has underlined the need for some means of facilitating the ongoing, in-depth, well-documented study of the history of Opus Dei and hence a deeper knowledge of its founder and his message. That is what the journal is for.

Q: Which topics will the journal cover?
Illanes: Studia et Documenta is published by the St Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute, and both the Institute and the journal have the same fields of enquiry: St
Josemaría’s life, his teachings and his work.

Q: What exactly is the St Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute?
Illanes: It is a research center that exists to promote historical studies of the founder of Opus Dei, his spirit, his teachings, and their apostolic repercussions around the world. It additionally promotes other fields of research on him – theological, educational, canonical, etc., – but the hub of its activity is historical studies. It was set up in 2001 by the prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría.

Q: What else does the ISJE do, aside from publishing this journal?
Illanes: In the first place, the ISJE promotes and guides the publication of the complete works of St Josemaría. This was the job it was given on its inception by the Prelate of Opus Dei himself. In 2002 it published the critical/historical edition of the first and most important of the works of St Josemaría, The Way. Professor Pedro Rodriguez had been working on that for years previously. Now the ISJE is working on critical editions of St Josemaría’s other works. Another project we are very hopeful about is a collection of monographs.

Q: What is the journal’s structure, and what will it contain?
Illanes: Studia et Documenta will be published once a year, at least to begin with. Its structure is simple: each number will include one section of studies and notes, another of documents (writings by St Josemaría himself), and another section of bibliography. The bibliography section, which is the responsibility of the Josemaría Escrivá Documents and Studies Center, will in turn be divided into three parts: long book reviews, in which the writer dialogues in some depth with the author of the book being reviewed; shorter, informative reviews; and lists of recent publications.

Q: Can you give us a preview of the first number?
Illanes: When we discussed the many possible topics for the first section of this first number, it seemed appropriate to focus on the beginnings of Opus Dei’s apostolates in different countries. We decided to include an article on Portugal, the first European country that St Josemaría visited with a view to beginning the apostolate there straight away. And then three articles on countries in the American continent: Mexico, Ecuador and the United States, and a fourth on a country in Asia: Japan. There are further studies and notes on other subjects as well.
In the documents section we are publishing, among other texts, the letters exchanged by St Josemaría and Bishop Santos Moro of Avila, one of the people
to whom, in the difficult times of the Spanish Civil War, the founder of Opus Dei opened his soul.

As for the bibliography section, the reviews in this first number are of books published in 2002 and 2003. Books that came out in 2004 or after will be featured in Number 2. Then, from Number 3 onwards, each issue will deal with books that have appeared in the preceding year. Number 1 will have a list of all the editions and translations of St Josemaría’s works up until 2002. The journal will then update that list in successive issues, and provide further lists of studies about St Josemaría and Opus Dei.

Q: You mentioned the Josemaría Escrivá Documents and Studies Center. Could you explain what it is?
Illanes: It goes back to before the ISJE and, of course, before the journal. It was set up in the University of Navarre, Spain, at the beginning of the 1990s, and it has been a section of the ISJE since 2002. The Josemaría Escrivá Documents and Studies Center has worked intensely over the past years to prepare a database of publications about St Josemaría and Opus Dei. Hence it was obvious that it should be responsible for the bibliography section of the journal, working closely with the Editorial Board.

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