

■ BY LUCY GORDAN

Dom José da Cruz Policarpo is the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Lisbon. Ordained a priest on August 15, 1961, in Lisbon, by Manuel Cardinal Cerejeira, on May 2, 1978, he was appointed titular bishop of Calabria and auxiliary bishop of Lisbon, receiving episcopal ordination on June 29 of that year. On March 5, 1997, Policarpo was appointed coadjutor archbishop of Lisbon and succeeded António Ribeiro as Patriarch on March 24, 1998. He is also the grand chancellor of the Portuguese Catholic University and was president of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference.

Pope John Paul II created and proclaimed Policarpo a cardinal in the consistory of February 21, 2001. A distinguished scholar, prolific writer and lifetime supporter of ecumenism, His Eminence is a member of the Congregation of Catholic Education, of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and of the Pontifical Council for Culture in the Roman Curia. On September 18th, he met with Lucy Gordan at his Résidence Patriarcale in Portela, on the outskirts of Lisbon.

You were born in 1936 at Alvorninha, one of the 16 freguesias or parishes in the municipality of Caldas da Rainha. Just before and at the start of World War II, thousands of Jews from all over Europe fled here to escape Nazi persecution. Do you remember these refugees?

JOSÉ CARDINAL DA CRUZ POLICARPO: No, I didn't know until I was about 10 that our government — it was neutral during World War II — had chosen Caldas da Rainha as one of Portugal's two processing centers for Jews emigrating to the United States.

Tell us about your vocation.

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: It was a long journey. My first inkling of a vocation came during my Confirmation ceremony. Perhaps the bishop's sermon motivated me. My seminary years were a long period of testing, not without momentary crises. I made my final decision at 19 or 20 years old.

What was the reaction of your parents?



Photo: Gordan

JOSÉ CARDINAL DA CRUZ POLICARPO The Patriarch of Lisbon

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: Times have changed. Today, because most families have only one or two children, a young seminarian's first obstacle is often his parents' opposition; they often have different aspirations for his future. Instead, coming from a large family, my parents backed my vocation wholeheartedly.

You're the oldest of nine children. Have any of your brothers and sisters joined religious orders?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: No.

Were there other clerics in your family before you?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: Not to my knowledge.

Have you ever doubted your decision?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: After I took my final vows, never. With God's help, my deep faith has guided me through many difficulties.

Who was your mentor?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: Don Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, the Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon from 1929 to 1971, was certainly my role model.

You wrote your thesis at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome on the theology of non-Christian religions. Why?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: At the time it was a "hot" and controversial topic brought to the forefront

by the French Jesuit theologian, scholar and later cardinal, Jean Daniélou. Daniélou believed in "baptism by desire": that people of other religions, without knowing it, desire to arrive at Christian salvation.

What inspired your lifelong dedication to ecumenism?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: It's been the subject of theological debate since the Church Fathers. The Roman Catholic Church professes that baptism is the one sacrament necessary to guarantee salvation. In today's global world, this is problematic because most of humanity isn't Roman Catholic.

You once said: "We Christians, Muslims, and Jews all have the same God. Every religion has something to teach us. To live alongside other religions is very important; we learn a great deal from believers of other faiths." Can you explain your remarks?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: I firmly believe that you cannot understand another religion unless you have a deep knowledge of your own and live by its teachings. Because of globalization, we live more and more side-by-side with people of other religions; that's why I insist that comparative religion, the religious phenomenon worldwide, should be taught in school. However, don't forget that studying other religions can have a dangerous consequence: the relativism of one's own religion and personal faith, a kind of religious syncretism, the mistaken conviction, "OK, so we're all fundamentally alike."

There are truths in other religions which can help us to discover and deepen our knowledge of the truths unique to Christianity. Learning about others helps us to know ourselves.

We must leave our doors open to other religions in order to appreciate the richness of humanity. There's a spontaneous convergence between humanity's main religions in spite of today's extremists.

You are one of only three bishops of the Latin-rite Church who have traditionally held the title of "Patriarch." The other two are the "Patriarch of Venice" and the Pope, until recently called "The Patriarch of the West." What's the difference between a Patriarch and the other cardinals of the Latin rite? Why is the cardinal of Lisbon also a Patriarch?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: No, there are two more: the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the Patriarch of Goa in India.

There's no difference between a Patriarch and the other cardinals of the Latin rite. It's an honorary title.

In the West, it's left over from the very early patriarchal organization of the Church, which still exists today in the Eastern Church. For example, in the Eastern Church the synod of bishops elects its Patriarch.

In my opinion, the Latin rite abandoned this synodal/patriarchal system too early. The Second Vatican Council spent a lot of effort mending the differences between these two systems.

Pope John Paul II insisted on a Church which breathed with two lungs. Through the centuries the existence of the Western and the Eastern Churches has always been a cultural treasure, but also a cause of great tension.

Benedict XVI has renounced his title as "Patriarch of the West," probably because in the Eastern Church, for ecumenical reasons, the Patriarchs would be open to accepting the Pope as the *primus inter pares* or "first among equals": a Patriarch on an equal footing with all the other Patriarchs. This concept isn't



An "Azulejo" panel showing Pope John Paul II praying in front of the shrine built on the site of St. Anthony's birthplace (below) on May 12th on his first visit to Portugal as Pope Photos: Gordon



acceptable in the Latin rite, where the Pope is the only real Patriarch. By renouncing this title of "Patriarch of the West," I think the Holy Father wanted to show he was ready to meet with the other Patriarchs, but not as their equal. The Pope is responsible for the whole Church no matter what his geographical or historical origins are. His ministry is as the "successor of Peter." At this point in time the Holy Father had no choice but to renounce his title as "Patriarch of the West."

Here in Lisbon the cardinal was given the additional title of Patriarch thanks to Portuguese King João V's influence in the Curia during the 18th century. Clement XI's papal bull of November 1716, which created this title, justifies it because of the important role the Portuguese Church had in the evangelization of Africa, Asia, and Brazil during the Age of Discovery.

Since your return to Portugal after studying in Rome, you've dedicated your pastoral energies to encouraging new vocations, to personal scholarship, to the authorship of numerous books and articles, and to teaching.

Recently I interviewed His Excellency Donald W. Wuerl, the archbishop of Washington, D.C., who told me: "The role of a priest and therefore of a bishop, is threefold: to teach, to set an example and lead, and to sanctify." Do you agree?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: I would add another role: to listen with great patience and charity! A bishop's greatest challenge is to accept diversity in order to achieve unity! Although open to plurality, a bishop must create a Church that remains the unified communion, the community that God desires.

Like Archbishop Wuerl, you've been highly criticized for refusing to excommunicate politicians who supported the legalization of abortion in Portugal. Please explain your position.

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: From the point of view of canon law, these politicians did not create a situation which merited excommunication. Excommunication is a punishment. It's only worth doing if the excommunicated will suffer because of this punishment. If the excommunicated is a non-believer, he or she won't suffer if excommunicated.

Moreover, in contemporary society, the power of the Church is not what it used to be; it's no longer temporal; it's not the Church's job to inflict punishments; that's the responsibility of the judiciary. The Church's power is spiritual. It must unite. The Church must no longer intervene in politics.

After a recent interview, the journalist asked me if I was

aware of being the most influential person in Portugal. I answered that, of course, he was exaggerating, but he kept insisting that everybody pays attention to what I say. It's true; I receive a lot of letters asking me to take a stand on various social issues, on abortion, for example. When people claim that only I have the clout and command the respect to do so, I have to explain that my strength is to guide my believers and to refuse to intervene in politics.

Were your dedication to teaching and your capacity to respect the beliefs of others among the reasons that the Holy Father chose you together with four other cardinals — of Paris, Brussels, Vienna, and Budapest — to “re-evangelize” Europe?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: The re-evangelization of Europe was the brainchild of Cardinal Schoenborn of Vienna and Cardinal Lustiger of Paris, who died in August 2007. Lustiger and I were very close friends for a very long time. He, not the Holy Father, challenged me to participate in this project.

The idea dates back some years, inspired by the transformation of Europe's major cities after World War II, when Europe's rural populations moved to the cities with enormous social consequences. For example, my diocese counts 2.5 million inhabitants, a very different situation from 60 years ago.

What are your specific strategies here? Your biggest challenges?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: Reaching out to young people in these relatively new rootless, anonymous, urban hinterlands. We held Congresses for Re-Evangelization first in Vienna, then in Paris, then here in Lisbon, afterwards Brussels, and last year in Budapest.

This dynamic cycle is over. Maybe Barcelona, Bordeaux and Warsaw will take up the cause next.

My biggest challenge is the evangelization of Christians. Too many people who've been baptized don't live a life of faith. Most Christians today are content to live with the values of our secularized, materialistic world. Thus our pastoral programs must emphasize the value of a truly Christian lifestyle, the Christian model for achieving true happiness — this is our biggest challenge. It's no longer a time for meditation, but rather for action, to start a new way of life according to our *Catechism*.

Our Church is often too hierarchal, too clergy-oriented. We the clergy must accept that the Church is the people of God. The Church is not made up of priests alone. We priests are the servants of this people of God, at their and His service. Since our lay believers incorporate the liberating principles and guidance that the Gospels teach, they are the Church's best ambassadors and role models.

In other interviews I asked Cardinal Schoenborn and Cardinal Egan the percentages of their parishioners who attended Mass regularly. Schoenborn answered about 15 percent in Vienna and Egan between 30 and 35 percent in New York. In Lisbon? And throughout Portugal?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: Here in Lisbon we have two types of questionnaires to try to establish such statistics. One we pass out in church on Sunday, asking everyone in attendance to complete it and hand it in at the end of Mass. The result of this questionnaire: in Lisbon 13% of the Catholic population goes to Mass on Sundays. The other questionnaire asks a sample group of the population whether they are believers and practicing Catholics. Over 33% percent answer “Yes.”

The reason for the discrepancy between these two percentages lies in the changed meaning of “practicing Catholic.” Today a person considers him or herself “practicing” if he or she goes only occasionally to Mass and to confession once a year. The first statistic of 13% is more or less constant, but those who fill out the questionnaire often differ from week to week. In other words, every Sunday 13% percent of Lisbon's inhabitants attend Mass, but the attendees change. They aren't the same individuals every Sunday.

Thus we don't and can't know what percent of Lisbon's population goes to Mass every Sunday, but it's obviously considerably less than 13%.

Do you have a favorite saint?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: The Madonna of Fatima. In Portugal we have more sanctuaries dedicated to the Madonna than any other country in the world. I'm also a devotee of St. Vincent, the patron saint of Lisbon, and St. Anthony, the patron saint of Portugal.

Speaking of Fatima, did you know Sister Lucia well? I've read that you didn't always agree with her views on the supremacy of the Christian and Catholic faith. Correct?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: I met her briefly twice — the first two times that

Pope John Paul II came to Fatima, in 1982 and 1991 — in the hallway while she was waiting to be received by the Holy Father.

Yes, you're right, once at an interfaith meeting with young people I openly disagreed with a statement she'd made earlier: “There is only one God who deserves our adoration; the other divinities are nothing, are worth nothing, and can do nothing for us.” I explained: “Such a vision is outmoded. What are those divinities Sister Lucia is talking about? We Christians, Muslims, Jews, all have the same God.”

You were present in 2000 at Fatima with Pope John Paul II when the then-secretary of state, His Eminence Cardinal Sodano, revealed the “Third Secret” of Fatima. Can you describe the atmosphere?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: Total silence. It's amazing when a crowd of between 300,000 and 400,000 people is totally silent because of the intensity of their faith.

Did you already know the contents of the Third Secret?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: No.

Do you have a special memory of Pope John Paul II?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: An indelible image of the Holy Father during the return helicopter flight from Fatima to Lisbon



Pope John Paul II meets with Sister Lucia at Fatima during his trip to Portugal in May 1982

in 2000. When we got into the helicopter, he wouldn't take his seat next to the pilot. Instead, he forced me to sit there.

After take-off I figured out the reason. From my seat — the one behind the seat assigned to him — he could see the sanctuary of Fatima out the window for a longer time. From the expression on his face I realized he was saying his final farewell to Fatima.

When Fatima was no longer visible, the Holy Father pulled out of his pocket an old and worn-out rosary — the kind a religious old lady in Portugal would have — recited his prayers and carefully returned the rosary to his pocket. Only then did I inquire: "Holy Father, are you very tired?" to which he answered: "Tired, yes, but at peace."

How do you think that history will judge him?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: To assign him an epithet, like "The Conservative" or "The Great," is an expression of superficial culture. He inspired a turning point in the Church, a huge change. He was a pilgrim and evangelist even if in the 20th century. He traveled and traveled and traveled. He loved crowds and they him. He used to say that he couldn't breathe unless there was a crowd in front of him. He left us an example of deeply-rooted faith. My memories, my thoughts directed to him still guide and help me. He renewed my faith whenever I was near him, so strong was his personality and his own personal faith. Without his charisma and example, the world situation today would be even more complicated. He was a great spiritual leader, a great Pope. But please, no epithets!

We've been lucky in this past century. The Church has been served by several great Popes. John XXIII, Paul VI... He appointed me bishop. His penetrating gaze was almost frightening. He suffered deeply, but he had the courage to maintain the decisions made during Vatican II and he put them into practice. After Pope John XXIII's death, Paul VI basically had to start all over again. He was a giant!

Just before and during the last conclave you were listed as one of the *papabili* — a possible candidate for Pope — someone who could be a "bridge" between Europe and Latin America. Any comments?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: You know I'm sworn to secrecy about what was discussed during the conclave. But we can make a distinction between the conclave in the Sistine Chapel and the media's conclave. The British newspaper *The Guardian* and Italian state television (RAI) both suggested that I could become the next Pope. RAI even put together a biographical documentary about me in case I was elected. I usually don't pay attention to such hearsay; I brush it off. This time it caused me some anxiety. However, as I said to the RAI journalist who interviewed me, "We cardinals enter the conclave to elect the next Pope, but God's heart has already chosen him."

Do you have a special memory of Pope Benedict XVI?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: I joke that we're both officers in the same army. We're both graduates of the same university and we had several of the same professors of theology. There's a small difference: Ratzinger is 10 years older than I am. So, when I began my theological studies, he was my model. I read everything he wrote very carefully.

He's always been very courteous to me, although we've never been intimate friends, probably because I was never one of his students.

He's always been very protective and close to his former students. They hold regular reunions. Since he became Pope, we've met two or three times; the last time was last year during my *ad sacra limina* visit when we talked for half an hour in his study.

For your readers who might not know, every five years every bishop makes the *ad sacra limina* visit to bring the Pope up to date on what's happening at home in his diocese.

Could you comment about whether the next Pope might not be a European?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: The Church is universal, so that's a possibility. I find the idea of a non-European Pope completely natural.

Before and during the media conclave there was lots of talk about a possible Latin American Pope, but I believe the strategic center of the Church's future is probably in Asia.

How do you think the Church will change in the near future?

DA CRUZ POLICARPO: In the near future, Europe will not forget the Judeo-Christian traditions of her past, even if sometimes we say the opposite. However, the European Christian community must begin again to live their lives with Christ, guided by the spirit of God the Father.

Outside of Europe I have great faith that the Church will grow in China in spite of the ideological difficulties, the remnants of Marxism. Unlike some other Asian countries, China has no official religion in opposition to Christianity. Confucianism is a philosophy, not a religion. It's important to note that in China a religion can take hold if it respects the greatness of Chinese culture. According to an increasing number of Chinese intellectuals, Christianity has that capacity. It did before, under Ricci.

I've seen this personally in Macao, where in 1996, in collaboration with the Catholic University of Portugal and the diocese of Macao, I helped to create a Catholic university, now called the Macao Inter-University Institute, with seven or eight departments including Christian studies. One of my greatest satisfactions: its new campus will be operational in 2010. I've been to Macao 12 times and to the mainland twice. ○

Lucy Gordan is an American writer who lives in Rome.



Pope John Paul II creates José da Cruz Policarpo cardinal in the consistory of February 21, 2001

(Photo: Grzegorz Galazka)