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OPUS DEI
AND ITS ARRIVAL
IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

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Some biographers of saints have in the past been interested only in highlighting extraordinary things in the lives of God's servants, from even their earliest days in the cradle. They have, unintentionally perhaps, done a disservice to christian truth. They even said of some of them that as babies they did not cry, nor drink their mother's milk on Fridays, out of a spirit of penance. You and I came into this world crying our heads off, and we most assuredly drank our milk in total disregard for fasts and ember days.

—Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, *Christ is Passing By*, 1974:26.

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ABSTRACT

Opus Dei, the Catholic Church's first personal prelature, has attracted a great deal of passion and argument in its 60 or 70 years of existence. Very little has been written about Opus Dei in this part of the world, and as far as I am aware, no previous academic research has been done. The purpose of this thesis is to give the reader a brief overview of Opus Dei and its beginnings in this part of the world.

I have begun by looking at the development of the pioneer Georgian and Victorian world where Australasian Catholicism has its roots, at the people who made up that world, and their customs and beliefs. The success or failure of the Opus Dei enterprise in this part of the world is obviously very much bound up with the kind of people and religious attitudes they encountered on arrival.

A variety of new Catholic groups sprang up during the twentieth century. A number, like Opus Dei, had their origins in traditional European Catholicism, but soon spread further afield. Other groups remained more exclusive. A comparison shows that while Opus Dei's structure and status in canon law is at present a unique one, other groups are similarly organised in many respects.

Is Opus Dei a sect or cult within the Catholic Church, as some allege? A brief discussion on sects and cults follows, and concludes that though Opus Dei does exhibit a number of the typically identifying signs of such groups, it does not belong in either category.

The world scene and the local Church situation of the time are considered in the following chapters as Opus Dei arrives in Oceania and settles into first Australian and then New Zealand life. It will be seen that the prelature is often at odds with what is happening in both the national Catholic churches and the wider community.

My conclusion finds that there is much good in Opus Dei for the Church to affirm, but members' energies are probably too narrowly focused. A meeting of minds within the wider Church would be beneficial to all.

Appendices enlarge on information given in the text, and list further sources of information for those who would like to investigate further.

INTRODUCTION

Even today the name Opus Dei is not well-known in this part of the world outside the Catholic Church and certain academic circles. This Roman-based organisation, founded early in the twentieth century by a Spanish priest, has attracted controversy from the start. It offers a severe, highly structured lifestyle which places great emphasis on the virtues of hard work and devotion to traditional Catholic values and spirituality. After a rather slow beginning, it has spread to many parts of the world in recent decades. Members were invited to Australia by Archbishop Gilroy of Sydney in 1963, and to New Zealand in 1988 by Bishop Gaines of the Hamilton Diocese. Many Catholics, lay and religious, are wondering just what impact this exotic newcomer will have on their local communities in the long term. It is not easy to obtain detailed and unbiased information about Opus Dei in Australasia. The organisation's byword is "discretion," and most "outside" comment comes from those who disagree with Opus Dei's methods and theological stance.

As Spanish sociologist Joan Estruch discovered when researching the topic for *Saints And Schemers*, any non-partisan writing on Opus Dei will attract a broad range of complaint (Estruch 1995: 3-4). The result will be insufficiently obsequious for some and too uncritical for others. The prelature's leadership dislikes most publicity, and does not approve of anyone who is not a member writing about Opus Dei (Kamm 3/1/1984:38). Whatever is said will never be quite right, because the author does not have the correct inner "understanding." Those who dislike Opus Dei and its activities want the organisation either ignored or rigorously criticised.

Founder Josemaria Escrava developed his vision gradually. He began by offering spiritual direction to workers and university students in Madrid. In 1928 he thought of developing a work that encouraged people to deepen their Catholic understanding and practice, taking their faith into all areas of life rather than airing it only in church on Sundays. At first Escrava was interested only in men's spiritual development, but in 1930 decided to include women. With the founding of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in 1943, Opus Dei took the shape it maintains to the present day, a lay organisation with a branch for priests (Berglar 1994:327-328).

To understand Opus Dei and its founder it is necessary to look at the early 20th century Spanish world from which they sprang. It was a time of turmoil and bitter debate. There was a tremendous amount of poverty, especially in rural areas, causing many to turn to socialism for solutions to their plight. The Catholic Church was losing some measure of the control it had exercised for centuries over all areas of Spanish life. The great tragedy of the era was of course the Civil War of 1936 to 1938. Both sides committed terrible atrocities

against soldiers and civilians alike (Mitchell 1982:6-7;78-80). Thousands of priests and religious were murdered. Escriva had to flee, wearing a wedding ring as part of his disguise. Opus Dei began to grow at the end of this period of bloodshed and ideological fury. With prim right wing General Franco, the “sphinx without a secret,” in charge of the country when hostilities ceased, the Catholic Church came into its own – at a price. Only one model of virtue was espoused, that of the “caudillo,” meaning leader or chief – a devout, brave, incorruptible patriot, a manly soldier of the faith. Escriva promoted this ideal in his best known work, *El Camino, The Way*, a collection of 999 pious sayings and exhortations. Women’s development was much less emphasised. It was enough for them to be “prudent.”

Some see Opus Dei as a positive force in an amoral secularised world that has largely lost its way (West 1987:160-162; Hertel 1987:99). Idealistic young people are attracted by the prelature’s emphasis on loyalty and order, its drive for academic and spiritual excellence, and the supportive fellowship offered to newcomers. There are few grey areas with Opus Dei (Collins 1986:103-107). The words of the Pope and Magisterium are law, divinely inspired.

Criticism of Opus Dei is basically the same world wide. Liberal elements in the church see the prelature’s theological stance as pre-Vatican II and life-denying. They point out that while much emphasis is given to matters of obedience and sexual morality, little is said on major concerns such as poverty, war and social inequality. There are complaints of secrecy, the splitting up of families, and ill feeling and lack of co-operation between Escriva’s priests and diocesan clergy (Walsh 1989:160-176; Kamm 3/1/1984:38).

Escriva often spoke proudly of spending his whole adult life involved with a variety of universities. The most frequent complaint about Opus Dei is that it targets rich and intelligent students on campus, often encouraging them to join without even consulting their parents. Feminists condemn the treatment of women members. There are also stories, mostly unproven, of involvement in sinister political and financial dealings (Hutchison 1997:229-292).

Escriva’s beatification in 1992 raised a great deal of protest. The Pope proceeded in spite of receiving many submissions opposed to the cause, including a number from Spanish bishops. John Paul II had created Opus Dei a personal prelature in 1982, the only one in existence to date. The Pope supports Opus Dei. His personal assistant, Dr Joaquin Navarro-Valls, is a long time member.

Opus Dei was invited into both New Zealand and Australia in the first instance to take over university chaplaincies. A small group of priests and laymen came first. When they were established, women members from Spain, the United States and South America fol-

lowed, setting up separate residences for themselves. The organisation shares its founder's concern with education at all levels from kindergarten up. All members, male and female, who are capable of obtaining degrees are expected to do so, to doctoral level where possible. Celibate members in Australasia are well qualified and highly motivated. Even the women who do the housework and cooking may be professional people with degrees.

Most literature in English on Opus Dei is either self-published and hagiographical, or written by highly critical opponents. There is much repetition on both sides. Ex-Jesuit Michael Walsh's *The Secret World of Opus Dei*, published in 1989, was for years the main source of information for the curious (Walsh 1989). Three interesting books have since appeared, one of them a translation from the Spanish.

Beyond the Threshold is written by Maria del Carmen Tapia, mentioned in Walsh's book (Tapia 1997). She once worked with Escriva in Rome, and later headed the women's branch in Venezuela before becoming disillusioned and leaving the organisation. Spanish sociologist Joan Estruch's *Saints and Schemers* is a scholarly and fairly unbiased examination of Escriva and the prelature he created (Estruch 1995). The least successful volume is Robert Hutchison's *Their Kingdom Come*. A banner across the jacket proclaiming that this is "the book the Catholic Church won't want you to read!" sets the tone. Much of the material is taken from earlier publications. Journalist Hutchison's odd surmise is that Opus Dei is preparing for a holy war against Islam (Hutchison 1997). He does however offer some interesting pieces of information not found elsewhere.

Opus Dei is often accused of being a sect or cult with its own leader (third Prelate Javier Echevarria) and secret deviant rules and activities. It is by no means the only specialised group within the Church. All kinds of movements exist, following a particular leader or charism. Focolare, founded by Chiara Lubich during World War II, is now a powerful force world wide. Communion and Liberation and the Neocatechumenate have a considerable following. Ecclesia Dei hopes for the restoration of the Latin Mass. Australia has its own unique Little Pebble, a layman who proclaims as his divine mission in life the gathering of many wives and the fathering of a multitude of children. He has not to date been excommunicated.

Though many of the distinguishing marks of sects and cults could be applied to Opus Dei – and a range of other Catholic groups – I will suggest that the prelature is rather an example of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, a little church within the church. Opus Dei has no separate doctrines of its own, and is a recognised and fully functional part of the universal Church.

There is a slight but growing apprehension that Opus Dei may attempt to capture the Papacy when John Paul II dies. An increasing number of Cardinals are members, one of the latest appointed being Peru's well-known Juan Luis Cipriani. Its hold is much stronger in some countries than in others, however. Its influence on Australasia's down-to-earth society has been slight. Traditional Spanish piety is foreign to most people in this part of the world. Australia has between 300 and 400 members after nearly 40 years of missionary activity. The New Zealand figure is considerably less. These numbers include members imported from overseas to take on leadership roles, and foreign members studying and working in the area.

There are many shades of interpretation to Opus Dei, even in such seemingly straightforward matters as the date of foundation. Members claim Escriva was divinely inspired while attending a retreat on 2nd October, 1928. This is the date recorded and celebrated. Yet Berglar's officially sanctioned book has Escriva himself as the only "member" for the first ten years (Berglar 1994:50;57-58,etc). The probing Estruch puts the founding of the prelature about ten years later than claimed.

It is not possible in a study of this length to do more than briefly consider the main sources of information available. Rather than attempt any in-depth analysis of the Opus Dei phenomenon or take a stand on which stories seem the most likely from among many competing claims, I have endeavoured to find a middle ground from which to inform the reader. As Joan Estruch soon discovered, without hard evidence it is often impossible to discern which version of a particular tale, if any, tells the truth. Even with all the first-hand Spanish resources he had at his disposal, Estruch was often unable to unravel the conflicting rumours, speculations and stories that were passed to him (Letter from Professor Joan Estruch, 3/3/2000).

Gathering information on the prelature was a challenge. Neutral material especially was hard to find. Written resources on Opus Dei are limited in this part of the world, though that is not necessarily a disadvantage, as much material is repeated in both pro- and anti- Opus Dei sources. My research was hampered considerably by a lack of co-operation from all kinds of people, from some bishops and academics down, who refused to share information they held, or discuss their Opus Dei experiences, good or bad. I was also hindered on numerous occasions by not being able to reveal my sources after personal discussions, or write as frankly as I would have liked. Because of the controversy and strong emotions any mention of Opus Dei arouses in the Catholic world, and the fact that the prelature sometimes threatens to take legal action when anything they have not first approved is written about them (Walsh 1989:14, for example), I decided to err on the side of caution. To protect my private sources of information, pro, neutral and anti Opus Dei,

I have chosen to keep all names confidential. I must say that all members of Opus Dei whom I met treated me with courtesy and respect, answering my questions to the best of their ability. There was also, however, the occasional “joking” reference to previous cases where the prelature had considered suing individuals who had in some way “misrepresented” them. It was interesting to see the depth of feeling aroused by this comparatively new arrival on the Australasian scene.

It is unlikely that the full truth will ever be known about many of the controversies surrounding Opus Dei and its founder. All of the earliest figures on the scene are dead, sources of evidence incomplete, and many surviving documents lie in secret files that will never reach the public gaze. There is still much interesting material in circulation, however. Those wishing to know more may seek out the available literature, or contact further sources of information, some of which are listed in Appendix Q.

PERSONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis is about real life, not hagiographical dreams. It deals with success and failure, honesty and evasion, good and bad. It is about real people doing their best to succeed in an imperfect world. It is about colliding world views, idealism often gone wrong, and love misplaced. It concerns people who, from the founder down, gave everything they had and everything they were to a vision of a better way of life.

All the criticisms aired here, and the history that does not match the official version, I discovered on my own. Members whom I met were at all times loyal to their organisation. They spoke of the peace and joy life within Opus Dei had brought them, of their admiration for the founder and his successors. They were kind, open and hospitable to me at all times, and I regret any grief or disappointment that my investigations may cause them. An academic study by its very nature must be impartial, looking at the evidence and the stories on both sides. This does not imply a lack of care for my Opus Dei friends. On the contrary, I salute their devotion to their ideal, their busy, talented lives, their service to others, and their love of God and humanity. My affection and admiration for them is unchanged.

The story of Opus Dei contains many valuable lessons for us all.

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Chapter 1

CATHOLICISM IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

No one knows for sure who were the first Catholics to set foot in New Zealand and Australia, in what was then regarded in the west as the remotest and most forlorn part of the world. Possibly they were crew members of one of the early voyages of exploration in southern waters. Various nationalities had called at ports in the south well before 1700. Explorers gave their names to the areas they “discovered.” Spanish Torres passed through the strait that bears his name in 1605. The Dutch followed, Arnhem in 1623, Carpenter 5 years later, and Tasman in 1642. The first Englishman was Dampier, arriving at Dampier Land in 1688. There may have been others whose names are lost to history. None of these early visitors had any interest in colonising Australia, and left without carrying out any detailed examination of the land mass that lay before them. As far as we know, Tasman’s sailors in 1642 were the first Europeans to set foot in New Zealand. They were not impressed with this country either, and sailed away forever. One sailor on the *Heemskerck*, Jories Claesen van Bahuys, may have been a Catholic (Schouten 1992:29).

It was left to English Captain James Cook, over 100 years later, to make a thorough investigation of the coast line. Michael King speculates that certain members of Cook’s 1769 expedition, because of their nationality, were probably Catholic (King 1997:31). Cook’s men were closely followed by the crew of a French merchant vessel, complete with a Dominican chaplain, Fr. Paul Antoine de Villefeix. On December 25th 1769 this Catholic crew probably celebrated the first Christmas service in New Zealand.

The first Catholics to stay any length of time in this part of the world, some years after these visits, were tough adventurers and men who had fallen foul of the law. Most were Irish. Some returned to the old world after working out their contracts or serving penal sentences, while others formed alliances with local women or fellow convicts and settled in the colonies for good. New Zealand was an “open” territory at this time, neither a penal settlement or yet a colony. Life was consequently quite lawless, even worse perhaps than in early New South Wales. The far north, now a tranquil haven of historical sites and holiday homes, had then a notorious reputation as a kind of brawling “wild west” of the Pacific.

After Cook claimed Australia for Britain, colonisation began, first by using part of the east coast, known as Botany Bay, as a dumping ground for convicts and political activists. The First Fleet arrived in Australia in 1788, just before the outbreak of conflict in France. The French Revolution of 1789, and its call for liberty, fraternity and equality, spurred people into examining both their religious and philosophical stands and the social structure

in which they lived. The horrendous events of this uprising deeply disturbed the British and European upper classes, who saw radicalism and dissent as a threat to their position. At the other end of the scale, those already inclined to free thinking and secularism were encouraged by the revolutionary events in France.

The Enlightenment philosophers had already developed a radical new approach, to examine and question inherited beliefs, to doubt first, rather than accept as given and attempt to re-validate, as constructivist thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle and Plato had done in the past (Capps 1995:12). The revolutionaries saw Man (and presumably Woman), rather than God, as the prime mover in their world. To them the traditional blind faith and blinder obedience were the marks of a fool rather than a saint. This rather testy rejection of religious values was soon to become a feature of life in colonial Australasia.

As shipping movements in the area increased, crews began dropping anchor in New Zealand bays. They sought timber to repair damage to their vessels, and sources of fresh water and supplies (Simmons 1978:7). Whalers, sealers and buccaneers set up camp at convenient spots along the coast, trading and sometimes living with local Maori. Runaway seamen and convicts and survivors of shipwrecks also made their way ashore in both North and South Islands. It was here that relationships with local women developed, and the first mixed-race children were born. Some of these early visitors were Catholics who would later travel to Australia to have their marriages formalised and children baptised. A few Maori took an interest in Catholicism, some making their own way to Sydney to be received into the church (King 1997:42).

In the meantime, settlement was increasing in Australia. The First Fleet had delivered some 750 convicts, and men to take care of them. The first religious service in the colony, conducted by the evangelical Rev. Richard Johnson, was held on Sunday 3rd February, 1788 (Campion 1987:3). Johnson's ministry was received on the whole with surly indifference. The primitive chapel he built himself was burned down by convicts, and they used his tracts as hair curlers and playing cards. After some years he returned discouraged to England with his wife and children.

Transportation would continue until the mid 19th century. Around a quarter of all those shipped to Australia, 30,000 men and 9,000 women, came from Ireland. Others were of Irish descent. Almost all of the first Catholics in the country were Irish convicts. Most of the Scots and English were transported for stealing, sometimes simply for taking food to ward off starvation. A considerable number of the Irish detainees, on the other hand, were political prisoners, usually otherwise respectable people convicted of riot and sedition, that is, some kind of protest against English rule. As O'Farrell points out, however, Archbishop Kelly exaggerated in 1922 when he claimed the majority of Irish convicts were merely political offenders who were "in their personal character high-minded, industrious and

progressive” (O’Farrell 1968:2). In fact there were plenty of violent criminals in the Irish contingent as well. Many were peasants who spoke only Gaelic.

Some devout convicts, stranded in a hostile environment without the services of a priest, were seen going off quietly to say the rosary or pray (Campion 1987:4). After the 1798 Irish rebellion 3 priests, Frs. Harold, Dixon and O’Neil, were among the transportees. Only Fr. Dixon was permitted to briefly exercise his ministry. On hearing that Governor King had cautiously allowed Dixon to work with the convicts, the Holy See constituted him rather grandly the Prefect Apostolic of New Holland. This lasted only until the Castle Hill rebellion. Dixon returned to Ireland in 1808. Until the 1840’s Catholics would be forced to attend Protestant services. O’Farrell writes of the “obsessive antagonism” that had its roots in this Anglican/English Protestant control over Irish convict Catholicism, a bitterness and suspicion that was to become part of the culture and a cause of dissension for generations to come (O’Farrell 1968:3).

Australia was opened for free settlement. Sheep, which were to become a mainstay of the economy, were introduced in 1797. In 1836 the government began an assisted immigration scheme which would attract over 200,000 in the next 50 years. About half were Irish, mostly impoverished men and women from rural areas.

For its first 40 years New South Wales was primarily a convict settlement. The 1828 census showed that 2 out of every 3 inhabitants had a convict background. Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand were mostly areas of free settlement. There was little control over who entered New Zealand before 1840, when it was annexed by Britain. There were, however, only about 2000 Europeans living in the country by then.

Protestant missionaries arrived in New Zealand in 1814, despatched by the anti-Catholic Rev. Samuel Marsden. They moved out from the Bay of Islands to convert the Maori to Christianity and share the benefits of European civilisation. Spiritually, progress was slow at first. Maori were not impressed with this strange new import whose articles of faith were often at odds with their own long-held Polynesian understanding of the supernatural. As well, many European cultural underpinnings, bewildering to such a different society, were presented as part of the “package,” the Christian world view. Most of the Europeans in the area were certainly not living a Christian life, which did not help the missionaries’ witness. Maori were eager to develop literacy skills, and soon were teaching one another to read and write. They also welcomed European technology in the form of woollen blankets, axes, shovels and other metal tools, and, tragically, guns.

The few Catholics in the country were left to their own spiritual devices. If they wanted to see a priest, they had to travel to Sydney, on one of the 2 or 3 vessels undertaking the journey each week (Simmons 1978:9). Thomas and Mary Poynton, named the mother and

father of New Zealand Catholicism by King, took their children over for baptism. Thomas, an Irish political prisoner, had married Mary, Australian-born of Irish parents, after serving his sentence in Sydney. They moved to the Hokianga harbour in 1828, where they ran a store and a sawmill. The Poyntons had good relations with both Maori and Europeans. They prospered and became models of good-living Catholicism.

Early missionary activity forms an integral part of the history of colonial New Zealand. There was no such activity across the ocean. In fact although provision was made for a chaplain to accompany the First Fleet, the settlement was from the start basically a secular one (Hogan 1987:9-10). The chaplain was funded by the government and sent off to assist Captain Phillip in enforcing a “due observance of religion and good order among the inhabitants of the new settlement.” In other words, the British government was concerned far more with social cohesion and control than the nurture or salvation of souls. The whole enterprise was very much an Anglican one. No attempt was made to provide spiritual care for the Catholic members of the contingent. Nor was any thought given to the native population of Australia, the ancient Aboriginal race who had enjoyed undisturbed possession of this vast island for many thousands of years.

There was some dispute about whether Aborigines were human enough to possess souls. Their spiritual lives were a mystery. David Collins asserted in 1798 that he had found the one people on earth who had no sense of religion (Hogan 1987:17). Dampier had described the Aborigines as “the miserablest people in the world.” Captain Cook disagreed, finding them tranquil and at one with their environment. The British government, while not particularly interested in the Aborigine, wanted to avoid the sort of conflict and bloodshed that had proved such a problem in colonising North America. Phillip was instructed to leave the original inhabitants to their own devices, and punish anyone harming them. In fact, numerous violent encounters between Aborigine and settlers occurred over the years, with casualties on both sides.

Rev. Samuel Marsden, the second chaplain appointed in New South Wales, did unsuccessfully attempt to convert an Aboriginal boy in his employ. Marsden soon lost interest in Aboriginal salvation, but was to have more success with Maori when he moved on to New Zealand. Others attempted to educate Aboriginal children, with indifferent results. The nomadic lifestyle of the tribes made it difficult to sustain relationships with the few well-meaning Europeans who took an interest in them.

Aborigines had in fact an ancient complex belief system rooted in their kinship with the land. They were more “religious” than most of the settlers. Many of the convicts were illiterate former slum dwellers and vagabonds who had never had any kind of moral education, let alone been exposed to religious values or Christian living. Morality was an upper class luxury well beyond their reach. Hogan quotes an eyewitness report of a shipload of female

convicts arriving in 1890, to find the men of the colony waiting to select a servant-concubine each (Hogan 1987:21). To survive in this male-dominated wilderness the women had to submit to these slavish relationships.

Catholics in Australia were to wait over 30 years for permission to have their own chaplain. Visiting ships' chaplains were flooded with requests from both convicts and free settlers. Two priests had requested permission in 1787 to sail with the First Fleet, but were turned down by Lord Sydney (Campion 1987:13). An Irish priest, Jeremiah O'Flynn, appointed Prefect Apostolic of Botany Bay, made the journey to Sydney in 1817, only to be rejected by Governor Macquarie. O'Flynn did not give up without a fight, going into hiding and exercising his ministry in defiance of the Governor's orders. He was winning converts when he was finally caught, jailed and deported. He left the Blessed Sacrament behind in a settler's cottage.

Devout lay people, including some convicts, had kept the faith alive during the long years of isolation. Campion tells the story of men such as Lawrence Mooney of Albany, who would climb Mount Clarence every Sunday to say the rosary, turning westward to Ireland and mourning his isolation from the spiritual sustenance of the Mass. James Dempsey, a Sydney stonemason, prayed with convicts sentenced to death. It was at his house that Fr. O'Flynn left the Blessed Sacrament (Campion 1987:4-5).

Irish Catholicism was a folk religion in those days, a whole way of life bound to community, family and national identity. It gave structure and meaning to lives spent often in huge hardship and disappointment, easing the journey through this world and promising respite in the next. Its curious mixture of formal Roman Catholicism, pious practice, tribal culture, superstition and ancient myth bonded people to one another and to their native soil. Irish Catholicism and British Protestantism were to be the formative religious influences in the European settlement of New Zealand and Australia, with Protestantism very much in the position of power.

The first two "official" priests, Frs. Philip Conolly and John Joseph Therry, were appointed less out of religious concern than in the hope that their presence would calm rebellious Irish tendencies (Hogan 1987:25). The government paid both Anglican and Catholic salaries. Anglican leaders were not happy about the Catholic appointments, or any other "competition" for souls. Samuel Marsden even accused the Methodists in 1821 of "poaching" children from his Sunday school. He made no secret of his abhorrence especially of Catholicism, earlier calling convict Fr. Dixon's brief Sydney appointment a "victory for the Kingdom of Satan" (Campion 1987:11).

Abhorred by their Anglican rivals or not, Frs. Conolly and Therry set about ministering to the Catholic population who gladly welcomed them. Both men were later to attract

controversy and discontent. Maynooth-trained Conolly went to Hobart after a year, and had the first simple weatherboard church built. Sadly this place of worship was to be neglected along with many of Conolly's pastoral duties as time passed. He became embroiled in arguments with both parishioners and church authorities, and died at the comparatively early age of 53. He may have been an alcoholic (O'Farrell 1968:16). Therry was more popular, and would last longer. His church was to be Sydney's St. Mary's Cathedral, which took 12 years to build. He was a busy and dedicated chaplain, feeding Aborigines who camped at the bottom of his garden, and keeping a saddled horse ready for emergency calls.

There was far too much work for one priest, however energetic. By 1833 there were around 18,000 Catholics in Australia – and most of them were under Therry's pastoral care. He became embroiled in disputes with the government over education, Anglican domination, and other issues. He got into serious financial muddles, and fought with Frs. Daniel Power and Christopher Dowling, sent to replace him as chaplain. Formal ecclesiastical authority finally arrived in the colony in the form of William Ullathorne, the Benedictine Vicar General of the Bishop of Mauritius. Australia was then a distant part of this Bishop's territory. Ullathorne was to be followed in 1835 by the first Australian Bishop, English Benedictine John Bede Polding, who would work in Sydney for 42 years.

In New Zealand meanwhile Anglican and Methodist missionaries had begun to make some headway with the native population. A number of Maori had accepted Christian baptism, while others were sympathetic to the ideals of this imported faith. Protestant missionaries had the field to themselves until the first 3 Catholics finally arrived at Thomas Poynton's home at Totara Point on 10th January 1838. They were members of the new French Marist order founded by Fr. Jean Claude Colin in Lyons. The leader of the new missionaries was the urbane Bishop Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier. He was accompanied by Fr. Catherin Servant and Brother Michel Colombon. Local Catholics were delighted at this impressive arrival, and flocked to the newcomers. The first Mass was celebrated in Thomas Poynton's house (Simmons 1978:11).

Administration-wise, New Zealand was not connected with nearby Australia, but was part of the largest diocese in the world, covering 65 million square miles of ocean dotted here and there with island clusters. The territory was bounded by New Zealand in the west and Easter Island in the east. Pompallier was the Prefect Apostolic of the South Seas, a title created in 1830 for Fr. Gabriel Henri Jerome de Solages, who died without ever reaching New Zealand (King 1997:38-39).

Soon after the French arrived the "opposition" made their first move. Wesleyan missionary Nathaniel Turner sent Maori who had adopted his faith to throw both the Marists and their possessions in the sea. The local Maori, friendly with the Poyntons and impressed with the newcomers, stepped in and averted disaster. By chance the Marist party had landed

at the returning harbour of Kupe, the legendary mariner who first sighted New Zealand. This coincidence was especially significant to local Maori.

The two French priests got off to an impressive start in New Zealand. Within 3 months they were both preaching in Maori, and Pompallier was composing hymns. Maori enjoyed the colourful solemnity of Catholic ritual, and as other native peoples had before them, found their own religious beliefs more in tune with Catholicism, with its air of awe and mystery, its litany of saints and splendidly robed sacred priesthood. Protestantism by comparison seemed often dull and plain.

Pompallier charmed many with his aristocratic manners and bearing. A number of Maori came forward for baptism. Services were held giving Maori catechists the opportunity to debate doctrine with their own people. Pompallier began building what he jokingly called an “Episcopal palace” at Papakawau, a simple building with just enough space for worship and sleep. Brother Michel was expected to cook outside in a shed – no problem, Pompallier said, when the staple New Zealand diet consisted of potatoes, fish and pork, washed down with water (King 1997:50).

In 1839 two further groups of Marists arrived to assist with the work. It seemed to the Protestant community that just as they were getting some results for all their hard work and prayer, these minions of the scarlet woman of Babylon had come to sow dissent and undo all their efforts. They feared as well that the French planned a political take-over of the whole country. Pompallier did not stoop to exchange insults with the rival missionaries, but certainly regarded them as heretics (Simmons 1978:50). The “tree of the church” he used to explain the apostolic succession showed the Protestant denominations as dead fallen branches. The devout Thomas Poynton was direct in his views, referring to local Wesleyans as “mangy curs.” These exchanges, common in both New Zealand and Australia, show that while some did try to leave behind old rivalries and make a fresh start in the colonies, others made sure that sectarian strife flourished in the new world as well (Jackson 1987:2).

Pompallier attended the meeting that led to the first signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, and ensured that religious freedom would exist under British rule. Because three churches were already active amongst both settlers and Maori, no one denomination became the official Church of the country. Pompallier advised his priests to keep away from political issues. Later he and some of the priests would become British citizens.

Unfortunately Pompallier’s charmed progress in New Zealand did not last. There were various reasons for this. First, he was not a good manager of money. He had great dreams and ideals, and fondly imagined “heaven would provide.” In fact, he arrived with only £113, which was soon gone. Pompallier moved with ease amongst the highest ranks in the

little colony, enjoying the social life, while his priests and brothers felt more and more marginalised and excluded from the European community around them (Simmons 1978:12-15). Much of their ministry involved travelling and living in conditions of poverty and hardship. Pompallier extravagantly bought a schooner, and travelled around New Zealand, going as far south as Port Chalmers. He fought with Fr. Colin, the founder of his order, who persuaded him to tender his resignation when he returned to Europe (Simmons 1978:34-35).

As Simmons points out, it was difficult to conduct a coherent discussion or debate by mail when letters could on occasion take a year or more to arrive (Simmons 1978:19-20). Pompallier had done very well out of his superior, receiving 40 men in 5 years, and an enormous £37,156 from the Department for the Propagation of the Faith between 1836 and 1845. He was in Europe for 4 years, returning in 1850 to administer a northern diocese based in Auckland and staffed by secular clergy. The Marists who remained would work south of Taupo under another Bishop. Unfortunately Pompallier was to become embroiled in the same problems the second time around, charming many people but antagonising others, including his new priests, getting in debt and making administrative errors. One of his more successful moves was to bring a group of Mercy nuns with him in 1850. Ten years later he was to make another expedition across the world, returning with Franciscans, seminarians, and 4 French lay women, including the formidable Suzanne Aubert (Munro 1996:20).

Catholics remained a suspiciously regarded minority in both countries as the population grew through large-scale immigration. Towns and cities were carved out of the wilderness, but poverty and hardship remained the reality for most of the mainly working class settlers, and their pastors. Many single men, and some families as well, lived in remote forest and bush areas with few if any of the comforts of the civilised world. In the vast distances of Australia these people would rarely see a priest. Their children grew up unbaptised and often uneducated as well (Jackson 1987:24-25).

Most Catholics in Australasia were still Irish. Between 1841 and 1850 23,000 people left Ireland to settle in New Zealand and Australia. This figure rose to a post-famine total of 102,000 between 1851 and 1860. The next decade saw the departures lessen to 83,000. They were to taper off in succeeding years (Jackson 1987:19). Not all the Irish immigrants were Catholic, of course. Several prominent 19th century Irishmen in both colonies had Protestant backgrounds. From the early days of settlement small numbers of Catholics of other nationalities sailed to Australasia as well. These included German, Italian, French, Polish, Yugoslav, English and Scots. In spite of the early Marist presence in New Zealand, the strongest Catholic influence in both countries would be Irish. The French priests and religious gradually died out and were replaced mainly by Irish men and women. Even today there are a number of Irish-born and educated priests and religious in this part of the world.

The mid 19th century discovery of gold in both Australia and New Zealand changed life for many Catholics. Their numbers increased as thousands of people flocked to the gold fields from overseas. Women and children followed their menfolk, schools were built, and communities developed (King 1997:86-87). Many of the first schools were informal and impermanent arrangements, lasting only as long as there was an available miner's wife educated sufficiently to impart a little knowledge to the local children (Simmons 1978:57). Priests arrived to care for the spiritual needs of the often rough and ready settlements, and churches were built. Lay teachers eventually took over the schools, to be followed later by nuns and brothers. Those Catholics who discovered gold and prospered were able to improve their position and status in the wider community. They had the means to educate their children well, buy better quality homes, and establish themselves in business. There was also good money to be made in providing goods and services for the often isolated mining communities.

In this open, sparsely populated world lacking the modern amenities of Europe and Britain co-operation between neighbours was often crucial to survival. There are many recorded instances of kindness and support that reached across social, religious and ethnic boundaries. Jackson gives examples of early ecumenism in both countries (Jackson 1987:36-37).

There was not only ecumenical but international co-operation in the pioneer world. Many assume that because Wellington's splendid St. Mary of the Angels is staffed today by the Marist community, it has always been a Marist church. In fact, the original St. Mary's was built by Irish Capuchin Fr. Jeremiah O'Reily, and was named for St. Francis of Assisi's St. Mary of the Angels (O'Sullivan 1977:51).

Patricia Brooks tells the unusual story of how Fr. O'Reily obtained his first substantial funding. As he arrived in Wellington harbour in 1843 his ship collided with another vessel departing for the Philippines. After surveying the bleak region where he was to live and work, Fr. O'Reily wrote to the Bishop of Manila requesting financial aid for his new apostolate. Franciscan friars had in the past done extremely well in evangelising the Philippines. The Bishop sent enough funds to buy land and build a house on the site now occupied by the present St. Mary of the Angels (Brooks 1998:51).

Fr. O'Reily became the much-loved first priest of the settlement, and was known as the Apostle of Wellington. He was a talented preacher, a scholar, a tireless pastoral worker, friend to the whole community, rich and poor, Catholic and Protestant. Non Catholics would attend Mass just to hear him preach. Once when the Presbyterian minister was ill O'Reily took the service in St. John's, with the approval of the elders – an unheard-of happening well over 100 years ago (Jackson 1987:56).

Another Wellington resident who refused to let sectarian differences get in her way was Mother Suzanne Aubert, the French founder of the Sisters of Compassion, the only

surviving New Zealand order of nuns. After working in Auckland, Meane and Wanganui she came with 3 of her nuns to Wellington in January 1899 and began to care for the poor and outcast members of the community. Many of her “clients” were elderly single men who had immigrated long ago to work in the bush and mines, and assist in the building of roads and railways. Now, their strength gone, they could no longer care for themselves, and rarely had any relatives in the country (Munro 1996:251). Wellington came to a standstill for Mother Aubert’s funeral in 1926. Her soup kitchen still operates, serving over 20,000 meals a year. Social deprivation of a different kind brings people to the sisters’ doors at the dawn of the third millennium.

Interestingly, Wellington’s famous Archbishop Francis Redwood, who began as the youngest bishop in the world and lived to become the oldest, clashed with Suzanne Aubert over her welcoming people of all creeds and none. Redwood may have been a popular figure on chatting terms with the Protestant clergy and in the habit of walking with Rabbi van Staveren, but he was not quite so ecumenical when it came to charitable issues. Catholic nuns, he felt, should concentrate on caring for their own. Mother Aubert of course blithely ignored him.

Australia too had its outstanding pioneer figures, including women such as Caroline Chisholm and Mary McKillop. Caroline Chisholm, an English convert who came to Australia in 1838, met migrant ships when they arrived in Sydney harbour, befriending especially young single women, those who were the targets of unscrupulous men in the colony, and helped place them in employment. In a mere 6 years she found work for an incredible 11,000 people. She would sometimes journey into the country with groups of new arrivals, in defiance of the roaming bushrangers who never harmed her convoys. Caroline Chisholm is the only woman ever to be featured on an Australian banknote (Campion 1987:23-25).

Mary McKillop, daughter of a Scot who had studied for the priesthood in Rome, became the first member of the Josephite sisters, a community of teachers started by Fr. Julian Tenison Woods to educate poor children. The sisters, led and encouraged by Mary, refused to accept any government funding, relying on school fees and begging for their survival. Early on they even refused to give piano lessons, the mainstay of many congregations, because the poor did not have pianos (Campion 1987:47-50). Mary McKillop survived excommunication by an irate Franciscan Bishop of Adelaide, and was beatified by John Paul II before enthusiastic Australian crowds on January 19th, 1995.

An interesting Australian character of the earlier 20th century was Dr. Leslie Rumble, a seminary lecturer who converted to Catholicism after looking at a variety of Protestant churches first. He began a Catholic radio station in 1931, and was soon hosting a religious question and answer programme each Sunday. By the time he retired in 1968, he had sold 7 million copies of a book based on his radio programme. He was serenely confident of the

correctness of his replies and the authority of the One True Church (Campion 1987:135). His New Zealand counterpart, retired Marist Fr. G.H. Duggan, still tirelessly gives newspaper readers and others the benefit of his expertise.

Education was in fact a major issue for 19th century Australasian Catholics. A number of denominations opened their own schools early on in both countries. This was not just out of a desire to give children a good basic education, but to ensure they were under the “right” religious and moral influence from an early age. There was a strong secular element as well in the pioneer communities that opposed church control of education. Protestant and Catholic clergy had a battle on their hands – against one another, the government, and these who wanted a secular education system. The Catholics did not have the numbers needed to back their demands, and lacked the support of the historical institutions that would have been available to them in the old world.

The issue was complicated in Australia by the setting up of different state governments. South Australia for example in 1844 had a population that was only 6% Catholic. Most people were Anglican, with Dissenters being the next largest group. There was less sectarian strife than in New South Wales, with its convict origins and much larger Catholic population (Hogan 1987:43).

In spite of Dissenting leaders wanting freedom from government interference in church matters, state aid to churches was extended, and granted to schools as well. Governor George Gipps in 1839 proposed that there be just two kinds of public schools, one for Catholics and the other for the general population. Both would receive state funding. Naturally Protestants complained and the plan was dropped (Hogan 1987:53-54).

Eventually, in spite of opposition, the Catholic school system flourished. In 1833 there were 11 church schools in the whole of Australia. By 1848 this had increased to 48. In 1858 there were 174 Catholic schools. Though the Anglicans were doing very well with government support, Bishop Broughton complained that Catholics had an unfair advantage because of the commitment and availability of celibate clergy and religious. Many of these people worked for nothing, or for little financial reward in the education system. There was some “crossing over” of pupils. Even when church schools were available, not all Catholic children attended them. As well, some Protestant pupils were enrolled at Catholic schools, and both were educated together in the state system. In Ireland mid-century, all denominations attended government-funded primary schools. The powerful Irish Cardinal Cullen, overseer of the mission field, attempted to have “mixed” schools abolished. He believed that state schools were hotbeds of Protestant proselytisation. Within a few years Australian parents who did not send their children to Catholic schools when they were available were refused the sacraments (Jackson 1987:88-89).

When state aid was withdrawn later in the century teaching sisters stepped into the breach. In 1880 there were 815 of them in the country. By 1890 the number had risen to over 2000. In another two decades over 5000 nuns were teaching in Australia (Campion 1987:46).

The New Zealand Education Act of 1877 made state education free, secular and compulsory. Simmons believes Dunedin Bishop Moran's vehement opposition to the secular cause, and the bitterness his campaign aroused, actually contributed to the passing of the Act (Simmons 1978:66). Moran founded the *Tablet* newspaper and stood unsuccessfully for Parliament largely to promote his dogmatic views on education. He shocked a nation that had become accustomed to reasonable Bishops who usually co-operated with civil authority. Many people were keen to see state aid restored to denominational schools, but gave up when they saw that the churches could not reach an agreement among themselves. Catholics were marginalised, and Moran refused not only the sacraments but Christian burial as well to parents who did not send their children to church schools (King 1997:97). Auckland's Bishop Cleary was to continue the debate, at the same time demanding state aid for Catholic schools and condemning the practice of having Scriptural instruction in state schools. He objected to any religious instruction that was not Catholic. This confused stand did little for Catholic credibility, and was opposed by at least some of the other New Zealand bishops.

While Catholic and other mission schools did their best in both countries, neither the church system or the "free, secular and compulsory" state education benefited many Maori and Aborigine. Disease, dislocation and often persecution became their lot. For a time both were believed to be a dying race. European encroachment gradually led to the loss of their religion and traditional way of life. The Maori Wars in New Zealand and settler aggression in Australia damaged the missionary cause and led to some converts giving up their new faith. The Aborigine had no documented agreement like the Treaty of Waitangi to offer them even partial protection against the settlers' rapacious demand for land. There are still many issues to be settled today, especially in Australia.

The First and Second World Wars, with their mass destruction of property, dislocation of millions and huge mortality rates, accelerated the fragmentation and secularisation of society. Many after experiencing Passchendaele and Gallipoli, Leningrad and Dachau and Dresden, found it hard to believe in a personal God who had benevolent control of the universe. Australians and New Zealanders fought both with and against Catholics of other nationalities. Both prayed to the same God, and believed that he was on their side.

Old conflicts were often forgotten with post-war prosperity in the 1950's. Many left rural areas in both countries to seek a better and more satisfying life in the city. Considerable numbers of Maori and Aborigine moved to the cities at this time (King 1997:172-173),

only to find they were often excluded from the better jobs and housing. Refugees and immigrants from all over the world began arriving in the area, bringing new customs and religious views. Gradually the differences between people seemed less important. Though the population increased, church attendance gradually fell. The secular way, always prominent in pioneer days, finally prevailed. Religious observance and belief seemed to many an anachronism, an un-necessary frill to life that served no useful purpose. The changing standards and beliefs of clergy and theologians too bewildered many. Did not the Bible say God was unchanging? Eastern and New Age religion attracted many young people – and some who were not so young. The next generation would become the first to attempt to live without a God. Since the 1960's there has been in the west a steady decline in public confidence in all institutions, not just the Church (*The Tablet*, 19/6/1999:860).

The 1960's and 1970's also saw the beginning of the women's movement. Using forceful and well-researched arguments, educated western women demanded equality with men in all areas of life. Some, such as Mary Daly and Australian Germaine Greer, felt confined and betrayed by the Catholic Church. They wrote books bitterly criticising the Church and the male sex for millennia of abuse of women. Books such as Daly's *Beyond God the Father* (1973) and *Gyn/Ecology* (1979), and Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), while often extremist in language and theory, gave those who wished to pay attention a whole new way of viewing social, sexual and spiritual relationships in the western world and to some extent beyond. Women from Biblical times to the days of local heroines Mary McKillop and Suzanne Aubert had chafed against the restrictions placed on them by a dominant male leadership. Now there was a whole new structure and philosophy to support women, lay and religious, in their desire for autonomy. All kinds of minority groups joined the fray, demanding as well that their voices be heard and respected.

Much of this debate, and the resulting changes in community attitudes, largely passed Opus Dei by. The founder continued to speak of the vital importance of apostolate, the joys of Catholic marriage with large families – and the indissolubility of these marriages (*Conversations with Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer* 1993:141-155). Members of the prelate arrived in Australia just as the Second Vatican Council was beginning its deliberations (West 1987:162). We will look in later chapters at the far-reaching changes this Council brought about, and the situation of the Church today. The hierarchical church still stands, but much of its power has gone forever. Its members, both lay and religious, espouse such a bewildering variety of world views it is little short of a miracle that they are still contained within the same organisation (Collins 1986:88). Much of the future success or otherwise of the Church will depend on the character and philosophy of the next Pope. Both traditionalists and liberals are naturally praying for the Pope of their choice.

There is still in both countries a rather blinkered nostalgia for what are seen as the old certainties. Catholics United for the Faith's small membership battles for adherence to the

letter of the law. AD 2000 magazine was founded in Australia in 1988 to set people straight. "I don't want confusion in my Archdiocese," pronounced the cleric pictured on the first cover (*NZ Tablet*, 22/6/1988:12). Unfortunately these well-meaning attempts, rather than grappling with the complex moral and social problems that face the world at the turn of the millennium, have people looking over their shoulders to a mythical golden past that was not golden for many, and has now gone forever.

Today's Catholic papers are an interesting mix of old and new thinking. The *NZ Catholic* of February 28th, 1999, carried articles on Bill Clinton's misdemeanours, spiritual direction, and feminism and doctrine. The editorial warned readers of Monsanto's genetic engineering of plants. An interesting selection of letters commented on age-old concerns such as divorce and re-marriage, paganism and the need for mission, and the current shortage of priests (*NZ Catholic*, 28/2/1999:9-10). The style of some letters is such that they could have been written 100 years ago.

The next issue of the *NZ Catholic* carried two even more interesting statements on March 14th, both on the same page. The first shocked many readers. The Holy See had made a diplomatic approach to the English government on behalf of deposed Chilean dictator General Pinochet, for "humanitarian reasons." The other quoted the Pope as saying that "love for the poor must be preferential, but not exclusive." The leaders of society, he said, were being neglected, and it was they who provided jobs and "other solutions" for the poor. This is the message Opus Dei has been spreading world wide, and living out for decades. A special meeting was called in Genoa to discuss giving "ethical formation to society's entrepreneurs" (*NZ Catholic*, 14/3/1999:6). No mention was made of the fact that the rich, especially in impoverished areas such as Central and South America, have often gained their positions and wealth through the labour of the poor.

By this stage, few readers may have been surprised at the Pope's statement. Though John Paul, *TIME* magazine's Man of the Year in 1994, has long been respected as an intellectual and philosopher, a freedom fighter and charismatic man of the people, he is also seen, as journalist John Elson pointed out, as the product of a conservative, patriarchal church; and increasingly given to making autocratic statements on sensitive issues (*TIME*, 26/12/1994-2/1/1995:29). While renowned for his all-embracing concern for the whole human race, and at the time seeming to listen intently to others's ideas and concerns, this much-travelled Pope will nevertheless not deviate in any way from traditional Catholic stands. Unquestioning obedience on the part of the faithful is seen as the only valid response to his pronouncements. He corrects priests and theologians whose opinions differ from his, and for years has been appointing more and more bishops who share his world-view, such as Opus Dei's Juan Luis Cipriani of Lima, now a Cardinal. The Church's brief official opening of mind and spirit to the outer world seems to be nearing its end.

We have seen that the Catholic presence in Australia and New Zealand began more or less by accident, with explorers, adventurers, runaways and convicts bringing their Catholicism with them to this far corner of the world. The first official religious presence in both countries was Protestant and especially Anglican. It would be decades before Catholic priests were allowed to work freely in the area, offering pastoral care to members of their Church, and instructing converts as well. In spite of the early French Marist presence in New Zealand, both countries in time developed a Catholicism with mainly Irish roots. From the start Australia and New Zealand had a strongly secular element in their community, a hard-headed pioneer core that saw value only in practical endeavours that produced concrete results. Religion was a distraction and a weakness to such people. Catholic/Protestant boundaries were often breached because of the necessities of pioneer life, and gradually became less important. Twentieth century wars and social change broke down more boundaries, and also led to falling church attendance as people gave up on organised religion, or sought alternative means of religious expression.

Opus Dei arrived in this part of the world during the Vatican II deliberations. John XXIII “opened the windows” at the Vatican to let fresh air into the ancient structures, but it seems that under John Paul II the windows are closing again. Opus Dei has flourished under the present Pope, whose views it shares. I will explain how this unusual organisation had its beginnings in the visions of a young Aragonese priest, and after a slow introduction gradually spread around the world. Opus Dei is a controversial body with an unusual structure. I plan to compare it with other “different” Catholic groups and consider the possibility that it may be, as is often alleged, a sect or cult operating within the wider Church. We will briefly consider the life and personality of the founder of Opus Dei, and then look at the organisation’s arrival in Australia and New Zealand. The various activities of members in this part of the world will be examined in some detail, and progress made by the organisation considered.

Chapter 2

NEW CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS

The opening scenario in Gordon Urquhart's recent book, *The Pope's Armada*, would hold no surprises for critics of Opus Dei. A bright, attractive 18 year old Catholic girl from a close middle class family was in her first year of university study when she met members of a group within the church. She joined the group, and at once her family noticed changes in attitude and behaviour. Her conversations were full of her new interest. There were arguments within the family about these newcomers whose philosophy had taken over "Rita's" life. Gradually she focused more and more on her new friends and the group's activities, until her family was shut out. This caused a great deal of conflict and grief (Urquhart 1996:9-10).

At this point the story changes. "Rita" was encouraged into marriage with a group leader nearly twice her age. She gave up her promising career, and now is living in poverty with an unskilled husband and several young children. She is estranged from her family and devoted to the new cause in her life – the Neocatechumenate.

If "Rita" had joined Opus Dei, she would most likely now be part of a celibate female household, pursuing a secular career in biochemistry while devoting evenings and weekends to spiritual activities at home and in the wider community. She would certainly not have been paired with an older man without money or academic qualifications. The celibate commitment is seen as the highest good for an educated member, male or female.

Though the old sodalities and fraternities have gone, a bewildering array of movements, fellowships and local groups flourish within today's Church. These range from Catholic Women's Guilds and informal student get-togethers, through devotional groups, the Legion of Mary and Knights of Columbus, to highly organised, controlling world-wide movements that, like Opus Dei, incorporate all aspects of a newcomer's life into their activities.

A wide range of theological viewpoints are espoused by these various groups. They do not by any means all follow official church teaching. Some support the Pope, while others consider him either too harsh or too lax in his approach to his enormous flock. There are those who still demand a return to pre-Vatican II ritual and teaching. At the other end of the spectrum, married former priests and nuns form support groups and even join splinter churches. Books such as William F. Powers' *Free Priests: the movement for ministerial reform in the American Catholic Church* (1992) detail the decades of struggle undergone by those who felt called to a life of Christian service, but also wished to marry. Other writings are even more controversial. *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking The Silence* (1985) contains the stories of a number of American nuns who left their convents to pursue an openly

lesbian lifestyle. Some eventually turned to non-Christian religions, where they found greater personal fulfilment.

Many groups appear harmless and amicable to those who stay on their fringes. I have spoken to Catholics who enjoy the occasional Focolare Open Day, Neocatechumenate dinner or Opus Dei recollection. They respond to the friendliness, the sense of unity and purpose. Members are perceived as those fellow Catholics who choose to serve the Church in a different, more focused way, as a community rather than in isolated individualism. "Fringe browsers" do not usually enquire too deeply into matters of doctrine or structure, or seek to make a commitment to the organisation. They are happy to remain occasional guests, worshipping the rest of the time as usual in the local parish church.

Small groups are often able to lead a private and quite peaceable life within the larger faith community, even when they are affiliated to a controversial international organisation. They do not have the numbers or authority locally to be too forceful about their views.

Unless the browsing "guests" have some special quality that would be beneficial to their chosen movement, they are usually left alone, thus preserving a relaxed, non-threatening image of the group. People who have been urged to join, often without being aware of the full extent of the commitment, may have a quite different perception of the movement. A professional man described to me how the Focolare tried to enlist him, while at the same time discreetly excluding his less-qualified wife. The couple finally severed relations with the group. Married friends of a single man I know, disillusioned with their experience of the '90's vernacular Mass, became involved with Ecclesia Dei. The friendship survives, but only on condition that religious matters are not discussed. The single friend is happy in the modern Church and tired of well-meaning but irritating attempts to "subvert" him back to the pre-Vatican II Tridentine form of the Latin Mass.

When a dissident group is larger and has political influence as well as a strong representation in the local churches, the situation becomes more explosive (*The Tablet*, 12/10/1996:1328-1329; *The Tablet*, 16/11/1996: 1499; 1521-1522). Pressure is often put on priests and congregations to conform to the movement's values and behaviours. Religious newspapers often carry articles describing disputes resulting from a clash of ideologies within a parish or diocese, or even a seminary (for example *The Tablet*, 24/8/1996:1104).

The Pope's Armada strongly criticises three recent movements within the Church who have, like Opus Dei, won the attention and favour of John Paul II (Urquhart 1996:15-26). Two are Italian, and the other Spanish in origin. Though they are not personal prelatures, these organisations have much in common with Opus Dei. All have charismatic founder/leaders. All believe they have a better, purer way to salvation. All are now wealthy and powerful in both a temporal and spiritual sense (Urquhart 1996:21). They have their own

priests, a celibate laity and married members. They are aggressively missionary, constantly seeking new members throughout the wider community, bringing in Catholics, Protestants, converts from other faiths and those with no religious background at all. They are right-wing organisations that have undergone rapid growth in the last three decades, especially since John Paul II gave them his seal of approval. In 1985 he spoke of the “great and promising flowering of ecclesial movements” and saw them as “a hope in the entire Church and for all mankind” (Urquhart 1996:14-15). While the groups are criticised by some for their integrism, seeing a religious solution to all issues, and their embarrassing revival of old-world triumphalism, others praise their strong commitment, missionary activity and provision of plentiful vocations to the priesthood.

These three organisations, the Focolare, Neocatechumenate and Comunione e Liberazione (Communion and Liberation), claim a 30 million combined membership world wide, making them numerically much stronger than Opus Dei. Spokespersons for the latter would probably say they prefer quality to quantity. Ex-Jesuit Michael Walsh, however, in the conclusion of *The Secret World of Opus Dei* suggests that the prelature may have already passed its peak of influence in the Church, eclipsed by the newer European movements (Walsh 1989:196).

Urquhart was for some years a key member of the Focolare, and so writes with both insider knowledge and the disillusion of one whose ideals did not match the reality of life in the movement. He describes how the organisation grew from the wartime experiences of Chiara Lubich, a young Italian schoolteacher, in Trento in 1943. The Focolare is concerned with universal unity and love (Urquhart 1996:15). Today it has 80,000 core members and millions of adherents spread over 180 countries. Its messianic mission is to “renew” all aspects of human culture, from religious observance to politics and the arts. People are carefully cultivated, members being trained to make themselves “one” with others. The organisation seeks a full-time, life long commitment. Newcomers are encouraged to lose themselves in the movement, giving up all past “attachments” (Urquhart 1996:29;33).

The Focolare has a hierarchical structure, with the founder still at its head. Illumination comes to Chiara Lubich directly from God, and she passes this “light” on to her followers. Chiara (Clare), which means light, or clarity, is not her original name. She chose it after joining the Third Order of St. Francis in her youth, before beginning the Focolare. At one stage she also bestowed new and sometimes odd names upon her followers, giving them as well individual “Words of Life,” phrases of Scripture that were thought to be uniquely appropriate for each individual (Urquhart 1996:47). Chiara is seen as the mother of every member, the central figure in their lives. She is called “Mamma,” while natural mothers are demoted to the diminutive “mammine.”

The Neocatechumenate also has founder/leaders who are still the focal point of their movement, and are very much in charge. Carmen Hernández has been known to heckle and correct the Pope in the middle of a speech (Urquhart 1996:243). Carmen and original founder Kiko Arguello are said to have a free run of the papal quarters in the Vatican, coming and going as they please, and sharing meals with John Paul (Urquhart 1996:17). Arguello began the Neocatechumenate in Madrid in 1964. He worked first with the urban poor and destitute, then with ex-nun Hernández decided to take this “tough love” approach to parishes. The two believe that even active Christians today are unregenerate, in need of conversion, initiation and training in spite of their baptism and lives of faith. Prospective members are invited to proceed through the neo (new) catechumenate. The full course takes over 20 years to complete, and is surrounded with secrecy.

The movement is isolationist. Members live in community where possible, and prefer to run their own schools. Children are sheltered from outside “worldly” influences, and encouraged to make a commitment to the movement’s religious training at 13 years of age. It is claimed that most children stay in the communities (Urquhart 1996:334-335). Parents are encouraged to loosen their emotional bonds with their offspring – because family love is damaging and “neurotic.”

All the art in Neocatechumenate churches is the work of Arguello – and he writes all the songs. He considers himself an apostle, composing letters in the manner of St. Paul. He took his movement to Rome as early as 1968. It spread rapidly through the city and beyond. Urquhart details the investigation of “Rita’s” parents and others into what they imagined was a fringe group in their parish in London. To their astonishment they found the parish priest was a member, and was secretly conducting parallel church services for parishioners who were followers. New recruits were sought annually through public talks that were advertised without the Neocatechumenate being mentioned by name, a common ploy among such groups (Urquhart 1996:12).

Members are sent out on difficult journeys to witness to others. In 1997 I met an Australian parish priest and an Italian seminarian making their way around the North Island of New Zealand with very little money or possessions. They called at Catholic presbyteries as they travelled, accepting modest hospitality when it was offered, giving their “testimony” and asking priests if they knew Jesus as their personal saviour. The visits were not always appreciated.

The English *Tablet* published a report on an enquiry into the Neocatechumenate carried out in the Clifton diocese. The panel was asked not to read *The Pope’s Armada*. They took statements from both friends and foes of the Neocatechumenate, and concluded that though the movement had brought people to the faith and helped others renew their commitment, it was basically divisive. Rather than flourishing, the parishes under investigation were in

decline, with a much larger drop in Mass attendance than in other parts of the diocese. The panel recommended that the usual Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) be accepted as the “authentic way of evangelisation,” and pointed out that the Pope’s support of the Neocatechumenate and other such movements presumed that they would work in harmony with the local bishops, rather than set themselves up as an independent authority (*The Tablet*, 16/10/1996:1521-1522).

The other Italian movement, not so well-known in this part of the world, is Communion and Liberation, founded 10 years before the Neocatechumenate by Father Luigi Giussani in Milan, in 1954. It aims to inspire young people to idealism and mission (Collins 1986:109). The movement was popular in the 1970’s with pious students who disapproved of the 1960’s campus unrest and defiance of authority. Urquhart believes Communion and Liberation to now be the highest-profile Catholic movement in Italy, with a vision closest to that of the Pope (Urquhart 1996:16). Its involvement in political scandals in the 1980’s, however, has somewhat dampened John Paul’s public enthusiasm for this group.

The elderly Don Giussani is still the charismatic leader of his movement, influencing many thousands of young people. Crowds of 3000 will attend his campus talks. He has written a number of books with titles such as *The Religious Sense* and *The Christian Event*, expounding his personal philosophy as self-evident truth (Urquhart 1996:38). Like the other Catholic groups, Communion and Liberation has its own private jargon, giving members the special thrill of both secrecy and belonging, of being numbered among the elect.

Among other enterprises, Communion and Liberation owns a number of important publications. From the beginning the movement has frequently publicised its views in a variety of leaflets and pamphlets. Their stand is a militant traditionalist one, aimed at showing an immovable Christian presence in a hopelessly compromised secularised world. The Church too will be challenged if its statements and decisions do not comply with Communion and Liberation’s version of the true way of faith (Urquhart 1996:373-375).

This organisation is open to a wider range of cultural influences than the Neocatechumenate or Focolare, but all the favoured writers and thinkers are chosen, sometimes for rather bizarre reasons, to back Don Giussani’s ideological stand. Communion and Liberation has its own Institute of Studies for the Transition, founded in 1972, where confident pronouncements are made on subjects such as psychology, history, political theory and theology. The movement is attempting a retreat to pre-Vatican II certainties, to a world where, it was believed, there was no salvation possible outside the Catholic Church. Urquhart points out that in spite of their taking advantage of the trappings of modern life, this group is essentially medievalist in outlook, turning longingly to the original golden age of the Church, before Protestantism and the Enlightenment brought division and doubt (Urquhart 1996:375-379).

Communion and Liberation has groups in over 30 countries, but its greatest strength remains in Italy. It has spread more slowly than the other movements, partly because for many years it concentrated its main efforts on Italian expansion and control. However, it had already sent a few missionaries to Brazil, Africa and Switzerland in the 1960's (Urquhart 1996:262-263).

The Neocatechumenate delights in publicly producing complicated statistics. For example, it claims to have 82 parishes in the Roman diocese, which equals 29.5 of the whole. There are 349 communities within the diocese, containing 11,846 "brothers" and "sisters." Their Italian birth rate at 3.11% is about 3 times the local average.

Urquhart tells the story of an anti-Neocatechumenate Roman priest whose nieces were members of the movement. On being told that they must be bearers of the truth, as they had 80,000 members in Italy, he retorted that Jehovah's Witnesses, with 800,000 Italian members, must then be 10 times more correct (Urquhart 1996:261).

The movements mentioned so far are not by any means the most unusual or "discreet" within the Catholic Church. Another, little publicised "Opus" exists, for example. The Opus Angelorum, or in German, Engelwerk, "Angels' Work," has been in existence for more than 40 years. It received some unwelcome attention in 1991 when a German woman made a complaint to the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, Cardinal Ratzinger (*The Tablet*, 30/5/1998:697).

The complainant, representing a parents' association, was concerned that the Vatican allowed the operation of a group that had destroyed Catholic marriages and caused previously healthy young people to end up in psychiatric care. The organisation was not banned, but prohibited by decree from using teachings and rites that were not part of mainstream Catholicism.

Opus Angelorum has its origins in the visions of a Tyrolean housewife, Gabriele Bitterlich, who lived from 1896 to 1978. After seeing hundreds of battling angels and demons, she described and named these supernatural beings. "The Mother," as she is known, is venerated within the movement that grew around her. The Opus Angelorum Handbook names 243 demons outnumbered by 412 angels. Demons are capable of causing illness and disruption. They operate, alarmingly, through such mediums as peasants, gypsies, cats, pigs and snakes. To attain salvation, humans must join in spiritual warfare to combat these evil forces (*The Tablet*, 30/5/1998:697).

Though there is little emphasis on angels in modern Catholic thought, and prayers to guardian angels are much less common today, they are still a recognised element of Catholic belief. The *New Catechism* defines angels as servants and messengers of God (1995:329). Guardian angels remain an accepted tradition. "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1995:336).

Angelorum's beliefs however are far from traditional Catholicism. They comprise an odd mix of Christianity, New Age speculation, occult teaching, and writings of the founder. Some of Bitterlich's supernatural beings are drawn from Jewish occult sources. Others are more obscure. Neither the demon Schebarschenoth, who deals maliciously with mortals from his base on the planet Neptune, or his henchmen Adonai Melchim and Naschim, are listed in Davidson's well-researched *A Dictionary of Angels* (1994) which includes fallen angels, or demons.

In spite of its odd and sometimes contradictory beliefs, Opus Angelorum has a considerable following within the Church, even among priests. The founder's son is ordained. He claimed in 1993 that the organisation had 10,000 regular members and a million adherents (*The Tablet*, 30/5/1998:698). It is believed that some bishops and even cardinals may be members. Observers voice the usual fears of members seeking positions of power and authority to advance the organisation's cause. Many believe that the banned rituals still continue in secret.

Even Opus Angelorum is not the most unusual Catholic movement. The oddest I discovered would have to be the Australian-based Order of St. Charbel, led by a fiftyish former bank clerk who calls himself the "Little Pebble." His is an eschatological movement, storing goods such as baked beans and Vegemite according to a heaven-sent list, ready for the "day of chastisement." The food store is booby-trapped in case outsiders attempt a raid during the war, famine and flood preceding the last day. Only the Little Pebble's followers and similar groups in touch with the Virgin Mary will survive the great tribulation.

The main objection to the Little Pebble is not his rather uncharitable attitude to others, but his personal ambitions. Not only does he intend to become the next Pope, but he claims to have a unique mission given to him by the Virgin Mary – to "marry" many women and, like Abraham, become father to a multitude.

A New Zealand ex-member told the *Sunday News* he had become disillusioned with the Order of St. Charbel when the founder left his wife and 4 children for a 17 year old German girl. This girl was not the Little Pebble's only object of affection. He also wrote to a 16 year old, proposing that she become one of his 72 "princesses." The relationship would not be immoral, because he had special divine dispensation. Ordinary members were expected to keep the ten commandments, it was true, but God had a special, higher mission for William Kamm, the Little Pebble. The second girl was not impressed, and left the organisation.

The *Sunday News*'s informant has about 60 relatives involved with the movement, many of them living in Rotorua. He is concerned not only about the possibility of psychological damage to young members, but also with the military-style training with

rifles undertaken in Australia. The whole scenario is strongly reminiscent of David Koresh and his Branch Davidian sect.

The paper printed a photograph of a younger William Kamm, with more hair, being received by the Pope. To date he has not been excommunicated, though on 28 September 1998 Bishop Wilson of the Wollongong Diocese issued a public statement denying that the Order of St Charbel had received any kind of ecclesiastical approval from Rome. Kamm was told to refrain from publicly claiming official approval of his order; and instructed to inform his followers their vows were invalid, and they should not be wearing any kind of religious habit in public (Press release from Bishop P. Wilson, 28/9/1998). Kamm ignored the Bishop's directive. He is a charismatic figure convinced of the rightness of his claims, and has a loyal following of all ages. When the *Sunday News* article was printed, the German girl mentioned was expecting his 9th child (*Sunday News*, 14/6/1998:9. TVNZ screened an interview with Kamm on 16/6/1998, on its *60 Minutes* programme on TV1).

Paul Collins gives a good basic analysis of another Catholic phenomenon, the charismatic movement, in *Mixed Blessings* (1986:93-99). This is a changing, less structured movement that incorporates people from a variety of backgrounds and theological understandings. It began in recent Catholicism at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, in February 1967, and spread rapidly from other universities to convents and parishes all over the United States and beyond (Collins 1986:94). Collins believes that this "psychic energy," opening oneself to the touch of the Holy Spirit, was probably often expressed in earlier generations through visions and mystical experiences such as the appearance of stigmata, wounds imitating those of Christ.

The charismatic movement gave Catholics an outlet as the greatest changes in many centuries came about in the Church as the result of the Vatican Council's findings. The mid 1960's were also a time of great social and political upheaval. Young people found the "dynamism" of charismatic worship energising, encouraging and refreshing (Collins 1986:94). Communities developed, some of which still survive. Spontaneous and joyful charismatic worship was in huge contrast to the "arid moralism and rigorism" that had existed to a large extent before (Collins 1986:95). In the past, the Mass belonged largely to the priest. The congregation were spectators through much of the complex ritual, often understanding little of the Latin language used world-wide.

Collins believes however that indulging in charismatic activity is a stage through which people should pass on the way to a deeper life of faith in relationship with the whole Church. Staying too long can lead to a denial of more developed theology, and trivialise God into a "master magician" who is obligingly always on hand to prove the believer's point with a little miracle (Collins 1986:98).

Throughout its history a variety of devotional, missionary, protest and other groups have appeared within the Catholic Church. At the time Josemaria Escriva first conceived the idea of Opus Dei, various other movements already existed in early 20th century Spain. Escriva was building on well-established foundations. The opus Dei, “work of God” casually mentioned to him in 1930 by his confessor, inspiring the name he was to give to his organisation (Berglar 1994:64) was an ancient one. It was originally the saying of the divine office in the monastic choir during the night and at 7 intervals throughout the day. This group communication with God, said Saint Benedict, was the most important activity of a monk’s life (Moorhouse 1972:130). His motto, *ora et labora*, meant “pray and work” (Lodi 1992:179).

As we will see later, Opus Dei and its ideas were not received with enthusiasm at first even in Spain. Members were accused of heresy, of having masonic connections and indulging in masochistic excesses. This air of suspicion still surrounds what is now the Church’s first personal prelature. Members are often accused of belonging to an organisation which is in fact a sect or cult within the Church. Similar accusations are levelled at Communion and Liberation, the Neocatechumenate, and other movements.

These groups, including Opus Dei, do in fact exhibit a number of the commonly recognised signs of sects and cults, such as having a charismatic founder/leader whose word is law, withdrawing into a closed society, having an exclusive membership and private vocabulary, groups publishing their own literature, and closely monitoring the lives and behaviour of members. The movements mentioned here however, with the possible exception of the Order of St Charbel, are all still a part of the world wide Roman Catholic Church. Their members are communicants in good standing with the Church.

There is no definition of sects and cults that is recognised by all scholars of religion. The two terms are often regarded as having very similar meanings, and both may be used interchangeably in everyday conversation and in the media. Both terms are usually applied negatively to represent any unusual or deviant religious group.

Some scholars dislike attempts to compartmentalise religious experience and expression by labelling groups “cultic,” “sectarian,” “denominational,” and so forth. Religious enterprises often do not of course fit neatly into any academically defined category.

Sociologist Meredith McGuire, however, points out that the current definitions, however imprecise, have allowed important research to be carried out on religious groupings as vehicles of social dissent and change (McGuire 1992:138). It is recognised that many organisations are fluid, with a variety of members who may have very different outlooks on religion and the outside world.

The *church* is the base religious model, seeing itself as uniquely legitimate, and usually having a positive relationship with society (McGuire 1992:139-140). Its motto “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*,” outside the church there is no salvation, was that of the Roman Catholic Church before the Vatican II Council of 1962 – 65. The church usually legitimises the existing social structure in exchange for its support. It does not recognise the competing claims of any other religious group, and will usually suppress, ignore or take over the opposition.

Max Weber in particular developed the concept of the *sect* as a dissenting group that accepts only religiously qualified persons (McGuire 1992:140). Sects disengage as far as possible from society, and are prophet rather than priest-led (Capps 1995:169). They are usually deviant bodies that have separated from a larger, more world-accommodating organisation. Lutheranism and Presbyterianism began as sects after the Reformation. Methodism had its beginnings later as a sect separating from Anglicanism. Sects demand a high standard of behaviour and commitment. They often attract members of the less powerful levels of society.

A sect is a voluntary community where membership is an “achieved status” (Bruce 1996:72). Jesus could be seen as a sectarian prophet envisaging a new model of Judaism. Many Jewish sects existed in his lifetime. Certainly Christianity had its origins in sectarian dissent and disillusion with the power structures of the day, following Jesus’ death.

The concept of *cult*, clarified by Becker, brings the more unusual and loosely defined religious activities into clearer focus. A cult is defined as a loose association of persons with a private vision (McGuire 1992:140). Like the sects it is usually to some extent at odds with society. Usually the cult has not divided away from another religious group. The cult is organised around some common themes and interests, but may not have any highly developed belief system. Groups are often short-lived (Bruce 1996:82). Many historical Christian cults developed around a shrine or religious object, or among followers of a particular saint.

Joachim Wach developed the concept of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* (Wach 1947:165-188) to describe the “coexistence of conflicting religious orientations within the same collectivity” (McGuire 1992:147). Members of a church or denomination who desire change in their movement’s religious expression or organisation band together in a “pressure group” or a vehicle of internal dissent. They do not leave the larger organisation, but hope that their example will lead to positive change within the wider membership. As Wach puts it, dissenters “wish to raise the religious and ethical standards of the body without provoking a split” (Wach 1947:175).

Wach distinguished three groups of dissenters, starting with the *collegium pietatis*. These rather informal associations of colleagues consider themselves the “leaven of the gospel.” They lead the way in striving for a devout, disciplined life that will hopefully inspire the rest of their community, meeting for study and prayer. The first Puritans and Quakers and the 19th century Oxford Movement are given as historic examples (Wach 1947:176-177). McGuire points out that a healing cult or rosary society could also be included in this category (McGuire 1992:147).

A closer association of like-minded persons wishing to “renew and intensify the central religious experience” leads to the formation of a *fraternitas* (Wach 1947:181). There will be a degree of communal life within this “brotherhood,” though they are united more by shared spiritual concerns than through a highly structured organisation. They may have liberal or critical views on some aspect of doctrine or practice of the larger group. The Gnostics, Beguines and Beghards, as well as early Bruderhof and kibbutzim movements are examples of *fraternitas* (McGuire 1992:147).

The stricter and more developed mode of dissent leads to the *order*. This group decides because of their protest to live a common life that is more structured and demanding than that of the *fraternitas*. A permanent commitment is expected. As Wach describes it, “absolute obedience, fixed residence, peculiar garb, meals in common, special devotions and common labour bind the members of the convent and the order together” (Wach 1947:184). An order may be involved with missionary or educational pursuits, manual labour, or caring for others. Much of the life of an enclosed order is devoted to prayer. In all orders a special emphasis is placed on chastity, obedience to the common ideal, renunciation of secular relationships and possessions, and participation in all the order’s devotional and routine activities (Wach 1947:184). Many centuries-old Catholic orders, such as the Benedictines, Franciscans, Carmelites and Jesuits, still exist, as do some Anglican orders founded in the 19th century. McGuire also mentions “order-type collectivities” such as Iona and Taize (McGuire 1992:148).

Though Opus Dei spokesmen (they do not have official spokeswomen) deny their organisation is a religious order, we can see that the numerary celibate core of their collectivity fits quite neatly into this category. Members are committed for life to the traditional poverty, chastity and obedience, live in devotional communities, and spend their lives working for the good of their cause. Other types of membership fit into Wach’s *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* as well. Supernumeraries who are committed to Opus Dei and who live in their own homes, pursuing secular occupations while being involved part time in the activities of the prelatore, could be seen as sharing at the level of *fraternitas*. Those who are more loosely connected with Opus Dei, the co-operators, surely constitute the *collegia pietatis*. All in all, Opus Dei, along with similar groups we have examined, is a vehicle for internal dissent within the

Catholic Church, just as the Franciscans, Carmelites and Jesuits have been for centuries.

It comes as a considerable surprise to many outsiders to discover that the enormous and seemingly inflexible Catholic Church has within its boundaries a fascinating range of individuals and groups who follow their own private vision while also remaining communicant members of the wider Church. The two practices are often perfectly compatible, with individuals taking on an extra commitment as well as the usual membership of a parish. Religious orders have for many centuries endeavoured to follow Christ's example more closely by dedicating their whole lives to prayer and good works. As we have seen, Saint Benedict, the father of monasticism, encouraged his followers to seek sanctity through *opus Dei* – doing the work of God (Hutchison 1997:29). Until recently this often involved withdrawing from “the world” into private self-contained communities.

Josemaria Escriva believed that his followers, lay and ordained, should engage with the world both for their own sanctification and that of others, bringing souls to God. The Vatican II Council agreed with him, turning the Church to look outwards to the world. Because of its autocratic structure and extreme concern with privacy, many were suspicious of *Opus Dei*, labelling it a sect or cult operating in the heart of the Catholic Church. Similar Catholic groups that have developed over the last 50 or 60 years have also become the target of these accusations. These organisations, however, including *Opus Dei*, fit in a sociological sense into the category of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, groups which, like conventional religious orders, operate within the Church, remaining as well members in good standing of the wider Catholic community.

Chapter 3

ESCRIVA AND HIS CREATION

Much of the biographical narrative on the founder of Opus Dei is strangely featureless and barren. Similar phrases, repeated by a variety of compliant supporters, tell us little. The figures in the landscape often do not come to life, lost in a clinical recitation of statistics, or, worse, smothered beneath florid stock descriptions of heroic virtue and supernatural understanding. A quarter of a century after his death, it is not easy to grasp the essence of this man who was an enigma even to many of his followers. We are told of his “reputation for holiness” (Byrne 1984:2) and the great love that many who joined Opus Dei doubtless bore for him. On the other hand, we also hear of an impatient, controlling, bad-tempered man who was feared and disliked by many who crossed his path. Both aspects apparently were facets of this complex man’s personality.

Accounts of Escriva’s life raise many unresolved questions. Statements made by some biographers are challenged or contradicted by others. There are gaps in the history, deliberate silences, and claims that cannot be substantiated. Escriva’s motivations are often unclear. Words and actions frequently contradict each other. To a large extent Escriva developed his own narrative, even changing his name to better suit the image he was developing. Over the years he gradually went from the childhood Jose Maria Escriba to Monsignor Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, eventually petitioning as well for the title of Marquis of Peralta (Hutchison 1997:94,97;150-153). From an early age he felt touched by destiny, going on to confidently plan his own canonisation (Hutchison 1997:147), telling his followers how fortunate they were to have known their Founder in the flesh.

Like all of us, Josemaria Escriva was the product of his age and the culture in which he was raised. The clues to the development of his prelature and its philosophy are to be found in his history. He was a hard-headed Aragonese, born into a proud, devout but impoverished family. He lived through times of both personal and national tragedy, when sudden death plucked children from the family circle, and God must have seemed far away at times as nuns and priests were brutalised and murdered in their thousands. Escriva survived the terror with a fervent patriotism and a devout focus on the life of the spirit. His mission was to save souls.

This extraordinary man was born on the 9th of January 1902, the first son and second child of Maria de los Dolores Albas y Blanc and Jose Escriva y Corzan. He was baptised Jose Maria Julian Mariano. After their marriage, Jose Maria’s father had become a partner in his wife’s family’s textile shop in Barbastro.

Barbastro was then a small town surrounded by wheat fields and orchards. It was graced by a medieval monastery and a splendid cathedral which was occasionally used by the local bishop. All the 7000 inhabitants of the time were Catholic. Spain was still in many ways a medieval world turned in on itself, with much poverty and great extremes of wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few. Over half the population was still engaged in often outmoded means of agricultural production. Parish priests, like those they served, suffered lives of poverty while their bishops lived richly on another plane (Berglar 1994:9; Hutchison 1997:19-21). It was a harsh, lopsided world ripe for revolution.

Often tenant farmers were so indebted to their landlords that the whole harvest, and sometimes even their mules, would go on paying their rents, plus interest. The landlords worked with local politicians to ensure the continuity of this system. When a young priest told one oppressive landlord to mend his ways before returning to Mass, the older man simply laughed. After the priest, Father Martinez, formed a farmers' union and proposed selling some valuable church paintings to help the local people, he was denounced as a socialist and "mad." In the end, when Father Martinez had had enough and wanted to leave the Church, Cardinal Segura said, "I'll starve you to death." Interestingly, as late as 1927, liberalism was "a most grievous sin against the faith," according to the Catholic Catechism (Mitchell 1982:6-7). The Church ruled firmly over all areas of life in Spain.

Jose Maria's middle-class parents seem to have accepted this unhappy world much as it was, concerning themselves with appearance and personal piety. Those who knew Dolores and Jose remember them as kind, devout people who placed great emphasis on dignity, correct behaviour and impeccable dress. Both were always cheerful in public and very well-groomed, even when money became scarce (Bernal 1977:16-17). At first the family enjoyed a good standard of living, employing several servants and occupying a comfortable 4 storey house in Mercado Square.

Young Jose Maria was a fragile child. When he was two years old he became very ill and was not expected to live. His grieving mother promised God that if her son was cured she would take him to the local shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad in gratitude. His parents' prayers were answered, and they dutifully made the nerve-wracking steep journey up to the shrine, Jose Maria and his mother seated on a horse led by his father (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:12-13).

Three younger sisters were born, and one by one they died. Maria del Rosario, the youngest, went first, in 1910, at only 9 months of age. Maria de los Dolores (Lolita) died when she was 5 years old, in 1912, and Maria Asuncion (Chon) followed in 1913. She was 8. Fatalistically Jose Maria awaited his turn. His mother reminded him that he was under the protection of the Lady of Torreciudad (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:15). He brooded, however, over the fragility of life and hope.

Bernal describes an incident that took place after two of Jose Maria's sisters had died. He was amusing a visiting group of younger children, helping them build a castle of playing cards. Suddenly when the castle was completed, he swept the whole thing aside with his hand, saying, "This is exactly what God does with people: you build a castle, and when it is nearly finished, God pulls it down" (Bernal 1977:24).

Family tragedies such as the Escrivas' were common still in the early years of the 20th century. The surviving members of the family, strengthened by their faith, got on with life as best they could. Jose Maria had begun his education attending a kindergarten of the Daughters of Charity when he was 4. At 6 years of age he was enrolled at a local school run by the Piarist Fathers. He was a devout child, always remembering his first confession at the age of 6 or 7, and recalling as well his penance, being told to eat a fried egg! (Bernal 1977:20). He made his First Communion at 10, an early age for those days. He was by all accounts an amiable child who enjoyed the company of others and worked hard at school.

In 1912 Jose Maria travelled to Huesca to sit his Bachillerato examination at the Institute. Two years later he sat the second year examinations at the General and Technical Institute of Lerida (Bernal 1977:21-22). He did well and passed in all subjects.

As well as having to cope with the pressures of study and the grief of losing his young sisters one by one, Jose Maria became aware that his father's business was failing. There were various irregularities in the firm's affairs, and it went bankrupt (Hutchison 1997:42). The servants had to go, and Dolores, in spite of an apparent heart condition, took on the housework with daughter Carmen's help. Dolores would sit on a chair in the afternoons to do the ironing (Bernal 1977:24-25).

Young Jose Maria particularly enjoyed mathematics and technical drawing at school, and at that time thought of becoming an architect (Berglar 1994:15). In 1915 the family moved to Logrono, over 200 kilometres away and around 4 times as large as Barbastro. It was the centre of the Rioja wine industry. Jose senior found employment as a salesman in a clothing shop called The Great City Of London. His son attended the Logrono Institute, where he eventually received his Bachillerato. During private afternoon lessons at St. Anthony's College he got to know Argentinian-born Isidoro Zorzano, who would remain a close associate until his premature death (Hutchison 1997:43).

Some months before his high school graduation, Jose Maria had seen one winter morning a set of footprints left by a Carmelite monk in the snow (Berglar 1994:16). Discalced Carmelites were an austere order of monks and nuns who went about barefoot or in open sandals all year round as a sign of humility. The sight of these bare footprints deeply impressed the young Escriva, who set about thinking how he could better show his love of God. He took spiritual advice, and began attending daily Mass.

Eventually he told his surprised parents he wanted to be a priest. It was, he said later, the only time he ever saw his father cry (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:19). Jose reminded his son of the hardship and loneliness of the religious life. No doubt he saw too the end of any dreams of future business or financial assistance from his only son. A priestly vocation would mean as well the end of the family name – there would be no grandchildren of the male line. However, he would not oppose his son's choice.

Jose Maria boldly promised to pray for another son, and a year later Santiago was born to their middle-aged parents. Before this momentous occasion, Jose Maria had begun theological studies at the Logrono Seminary. According to Walsh, his health was too delicate for him to become an internal student at that stage (Walsh 1989:23). He lived at home, and had private tuition in philosophy and Latin. In September 1920 he moved to Zaragoza, the capital of Aragon, as an internal student.

Already Jose Maria was following a different course from that of the average theological student of the era. In those days boys intended for the priesthood went to a special school at the early age of 10. Entering a seminary was the only way many young men could obtain a proper education (Mitchell 1982:6). At the time Jose Maria started school around 60% of the entire Spanish population was illiterate. The young Escriva may have felt that the changed fortunes of his family ruled out a career in architecture. It seems that some felt he should choose a “higher” or more lucrative career than the priesthood.

Most of the other students at the seminary were, apparently, simple peasant youths with little education or refinement. They were quite dumbfounded at young Escriva's cultivated manners and his habit of washing himself all over daily (Berglar 1994:20). His “ostentatious piety” was also remarked on. Much time was spent on his knees in the chapel, gazing intently at the tabernacle. When he took up residence with the other students in the dormitory, they soon discovered he was in the habit of wearing a cilice at times, a spiked iron circlet that is worn as a penance around the thigh. Escriva was named the “Mystical Rose” (Hutchison 1997:46).

Presumably Jose Maria was not the only better educated and brought up young man in the seminary. One wonders how these ill-matched students were finally all civilised and trained to the same level of ecclesiastical competence. Jose Maria's biographers do not seem concerned with how the peasant boys coped with “pastoral, ascetical and liturgical formation” at the seminary, and academic training in “philosophy, theology and canon law” at university (Berglar 1994:19). Did Jose Maria perhaps coast along at their level? Or did a two-tier level of preparation exist, one for the elite and the other for everyone else?

Though the young student's uncle was archdeacon of La Seo Cathedral, he seems to have taken little interest in his nephew. Some biographers believe the Canon was unhappy

with the way Don Jose's business dealings had gone in Barbastro, and preferred to distance himself from the family. Jose Maria attracted another sponsor, however. In 1922 Archbishop Soldevila appointed him an "inspector" at the seminary (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:20). This was a supervisory role. He now had a private room and a servant. Sadly, his new sponsor had not long to live. He was assassinated at the age of 80, on 4th June 1923, in retaliation for the murder of an anarchist trade union leader (Hutchison 1997:47).

Some months before Jose Maria's ordination, when his younger brother Santiago was only 5 years old, their father had a stroke and died two hours later. The young theological student took the news calmly. He was now responsible for his remaining family. They moved to Zaragoza and took up residence in a modest flat. Dolores saw her son ordained on 28th March 1925, and two days later, with Carmen and Santiago and a handful of parishioners, attended his first Mass in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Pilar (Berglar 1994:28).

Jose Maria was sent to "supply" at a nearby village where the priest was ill (Walsh 1989:24). By mid-May he was back in Zaragoza, working towards the completion of a law degree he had been undertaking at the university. He supported his family by teaching law at the Amado Institute, a private academy that prepared young men for university and various examinations. As well, he gave Latin lessons (Berglar 1994:30-31).

Already, as Walsh points out, he was not following the normal career path of a diocesan priest. Though he was technically incardinated into the Zaragoza diocese, he did little spiritual work there (Walsh 1989:25). As soon as he received his licentiate in law, he requested a transfer to Madrid so he could study for a Civil Law doctorate.

He was given permission to spend two years in Madrid, and enrolled in April 1927 (Berglar 1994:32). But he continued his involvement in other areas as well. Predictably he did not manage to complete the thesis that had enabled him to transfer to the capital. His topic, the ordination of mixed-race priests during the Renaissance, was a rather unusual one for a degree in civil law. The thesis was finally abandoned when his notes were lost during the Civil War. It was to be December 1939 before he completed his studies.

A degree of mystery surrounds Escriva's legal studies. Antonio Perez, a former general manager of Opus Dei, went as far as to say he doubted Escriva had ever studied law at all (Estruch 1995:36-37). There is also confusion over his study on the Abbess of Las Huelgas, which is claimed as his doctoral thesis in law. Some books which lavishly praise him for lesser achievements pass over this milestone, and there is some confusion about when and where it was first published (Estruch 1995:36-37). Hutchison recounts the search made by the editor of *Cambio 16*, a Madrid newspaper, for Escriva's academic record. The Ministry of Education and Science could find no trace of Escriva in its files

from 1930 on (Hutchison 1997:92). Hutchison speculates that the “doctorate” may have been a gift from Franco’s education minister Ibanez Martin.

Escriva may not have spent much time studying in Madrid, but he was soon busy with spiritual activities. He paid 5 pesetas a day board in a residence for priests, supporting himself by teaching Roman and canonical law at a tutorial college (Hutchison 1997:48). Within a few months he had become chaplain to his landladies, nuns known as the Apostolic Ladies of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Ladies had a strong social conscience, helping several thousand poor and unwell people annually in their own homes, and running soup kitchens and schools (Bernal 1977:114).

On October 2nd 1928, the Feast Day of the Guardian Angels, Escriva was attending a priests’ retreat run by the Vincentian Fathers. While reflecting on the words of blind Bartimaeus, “Master, do that I see,” the seed that was to grow into Opus Dei was planted in Escriva’s mind. Many years later this inkling has become a moment of divine revelation and grace, with bells pealing and Escriva changed forever (Bernal 1977:105-107).

Escriva never did discuss in detail what happened that day. The work was God’s and he was merely its instrument. In fact nothing much happened for some time. It seems he did not tell his own mother about this new work of God for years. He had a cautious relationship with his mother now, so conscious of his priestly dignity and delicacy that he would not walk with her in public, in case it gave rise to scandal (Estruch 1995:64).

He did consult his spiritual advisor about what had happened, and tried to interest others in his ideas. At this early stage of his career Escriva was a “hands on” priest, happy to work with the poor, diseased and terminally ill. In spite of increasing anti-clerical outbreaks, he ventured into all kinds of sordid surroundings out of his concern for souls. As well he encouraged the young men who came to him for spiritual direction to accompany him on hospital visits. Two of his followers, engineer Luis Gordon and a priest, Jose Maria Somoano, died suddenly while pursuing this apostolate. Hutchison questions the wisdom of encouraging untrained amateurs, no matter how well-intentioned, to spend their weekends tending patients dying of infectious diseases (Hutchison 1997:62).

The unfortunate Somoano’s death, thought by some to have been caused by poison, saved him from a possible rupture with Escriva. The young priest was a charismatic, enthusiastic figure who won people’s hearts wherever he went. He wanted to bring all kinds and conditions of people into this new spiritual union that was developing (Hutchison 1997:61). That was not Escriva’s intention at all. He wanted a Jesuit-like elite, carefully chosen, educated young men, celibate, biddable and devout. He came across his boyhood friend Isidoro Zorzano, who joined him in his spiritual endeavours. Other “apostles” were gradually selected (Hutchison 1997:62-63).

New recruits, usually university students, were to be sought under the guidance of the Archangel Raphael, the regent of the sun, who according to Jewish legend was the healer of Abraham and Jacob and the guardian of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden (Davidson 1994:240). The ongoing formation of newcomers was placed under the protection of Archangel Michael, the greatest of all angels in Christian, Jewish and Islamic lore.

Women and married people were very much an afterthought in God's new Work. On 14th February 1930, while celebrating Mass in a private oratory for a member of the aristocracy, it came to Escriva that he should after all include women in his vision (Bernal 1977:136). They were needed for looking after the practicalities of everyday life. Next he would realise more priests were needed to ensure the correct teachings were imparted to all potential recruits. Married members were not admitted until much later. Archangel Gabriel of the Annunciation was to be given charge of the married personnel, and of "co-operators," people of diverse backgrounds who assisted the organisation in any way (Berglar 1994:102).

A few weeks after the revelation concerning the need to include women in the new spiritual endeavour, Escriva composed a pastoral letter entitled, in Latin, after the fashion of papal bulls, *Singuli Dies*. This looking to the future showed a great deal of imagination and faith – he had as yet no organisation and only a few interested supporters (Hutchison 1997:55).

A year later, in April 1931, King Alphonso XIII abdicated and a Republic was declared. Godless anarchists and socialists began burning monasteries and churches. The Jesuits were expelled from their own country of origin. Catholic property was seized, and the education system secularised (Walsh 1989:34).

Escriva, afraid that a rioting mob would invade the Foundation for the Sick, attempted to swallow all the hosts in the chapel. There were far too many, so he escaped with the ciborium hidden inside a newspaper (Hutchison 1997:59). Shaken, he resigned from his chaplaincy and sought another position. He was afraid he might have to return home, leaving his small band of followers in Madrid.

Father Poveda, founder of the Teresians, a lay institute begun in 1912, found the younger priest another position. Escriva became chaplain of the Santa Isabel Foundation: a school, an Augustinian convent, and a church. His new post was under the jurisdiction of the Palatine Ordinary, whose territory functioned like an independent diocese. He later requested the rector's position, which was granted him in 1934. Apart from his absence during the Civil War, he held this position until 1946 (Berglar 1994:86).

Escriva's family had joined him in Madrid. In spite of their patient efforts to care for the rented premises and prepare food for his guests, he soon decided the apartment was not smart enough. The shabby building had commercial quarters, including a lower-class bar,

on the ground floor (Hutchison 1997:65). So the family was moved into the rectory of Santa Isabel.

At the end of 1933 Escriva began the famous DYA Academy. Officially the initials stood for Derecho y Arquitectura – Law and Architecture – but they could also mean Dios y Audacia: God and Audacity (Walsh 1989:35). The tiny Academy offered supplementary courses for students. There was of course a religious dimension: Escriva heard confessions in the kitchen.

Escriva soon decided to expand, persuading his mother to use an inheritance to obtain a vacant building at 16 Calle Ferraz. He had been renting 3 apartments, with room for 20 student residents, at number 50 in the same street. A company, with Isidoro Zorzano as its president, was set up to handle the purchase. Escriva requested permission to transfer the DYA chapel to the new address (Hutchison 1997:67). Many other similar residences were to be opened over the years.

The first version of what was to become *El Camino, The Way*, a collection of spiritual maxims, was published in Cuenca in 1934. It was about “National Catholicism,” being a patriotic Catholic, a crusader who loved Spain and Christ with equal fervour. Tapia recalls how the copies of the first edition of *El Camino*, which referred slighteningly to “atheists, masons and Protestants,” while claiming Catholics as “sons of God,” were gathered on Escriva’s orders and burned (Tapia 1997:126). He prepared another edition in Burgos in 1939. Even historical documents were apparently revised from time to time, with the original pages being destroyed.

By May 1936 the political situation was so tense Escriva never knew when he might be attacked on the street. He was in a state of nervous exhaustion. His mother and siblings were moved from the rectory to a nearby apartment for safety. Two followers who had been sent to Valencia to open another residence managed to accomplish their mission. Escriva’s surprising decision to open an office in Paris, however, had to be abandoned (Walsh 1989:37). In July 1936 the Civil War broke out.

The Montana Barracks across the street from the DYA Academy were stormed. A horrified Escriva watched as the troops finally turned on their officers and murdered them (Berglar 1994:125). He slipped away to his mother’s apartment, disguised in overalls. It was his duty, as a man entrusted with a divine mission, not to be martyred like so many other priests (Hutchison 1997:73). Wearing his mother’s wedding ring, he escaped in civilian clothes to a psychiatric clinic, where he spent the next 5 months pretending to be mad. Here he was literally given asylum, according to Berglar, by the director of the clinic, an old school friend (Berglar 1994:128). Escriva was still in danger there, however, and eventually moved into a small room in the Honduran consulate.

He hid in the consulate with his brother, Alvaro del Portillo, and others. They stayed there in cramped quarters for months, living mostly on stale carob beans (Hutchison 1997:77). Escriva, who often seemed to be at his best in a crisis in these early days, kept them busy with prayer and meditation.

Finally he ventured out with false papers and travelled with others to Valencia. From there he went to Barcelona, carrying consecrated hosts in a leather case around his neck (Berglar 1994:135). On 19th November 1937 Escriva and several others set out to cross the Pyrenees to safety. The journey, even with a guide, was a perilous one. It snowed at times and was extremely cold. Miguel Fisac, who was later to part company with Opus Dei, at one stage had to carry Escriva on his back (Hutchison 1997:78-79). Somehow they managed to avoid armed patrols seeking fleeing refugees, and arrived in safety.

Escriva visited the principal benefactor of the Teresian Institute to see if she would support his work as well, claiming to have spoken with the Teresian founder days before his death in the Civil War. Hutchison points out that Escriva's biographers say he did not see Father Poveda again after the outbreak of war, and did not learn of his death until months after the event (Hutchison 1997:79-80).

In March 1939 Escriva returned to Madrid. His students' residence was in ruins, but he did not lose heart. He was photographed standing in a cassock in the ruins (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:49). He had a strong sense of history, his supporters say. Photographs, sketches, diaries and scraps of paper scribbled on by Escriva survive from all kinds of surprising circumstances, though his thesis notes have disappeared without trace.

"Follow my word and I promise you heaven," he pronounced. His time had come. On 18th May 1939 General Franco entered Madrid in glory. On the Sunday a splendid Mass was held at the royal basilica of Santa Barbara to celebrate the victory of Spain's latest crusader. Franco presented his sword to the Primate of Spain. It was laid on the high altar (Hutchison 1997:83). Though Escriva later claimed to see Franco as the "lesser evil," here was his "soldier of Christ" come to power, a pious, prim warrior-patriot who would restore the Catholic Church to its rightful place as leader and arbiter of Spain. In late September 1939, weeks after the outbreak of World War II, Escriva published his enlarged and updated *Camino*. Its introduction dreamed of a "return to the ancient grandeur of its saints" for Spain. A Jesuit professor of theology who was disturbed by *The Way* and said so in public had his teaching licence revoked (Hutchison 1997:84).

Escriva realised that the future lay in the hands of the young in the universities, and with those who instructed them. It was important both to see Catholicism restored as the state religion, the moral force in both public and private life, and to attract many more recruits who would go out and spread the word. The establishment of the Consejo Superior

de Investigaciones Cientificas, or National Scientific Research Council, was to be of great assistance to Opus Dei.

As well as being created to improve educational standards and assist research in Spain, the CSIC provided scholarships and accommodation both in Spain and abroad (Walsh 1989:43). Many young Opus Deists were to benefit from these provisions, and enabled to facilitate the growth of the work. CSIC had an enormous amount of money at its disposal, and was permitted to hire its own auditors. Between 1945 and 1950 it was granted 259 million pesetas worth of public funding. In the same period 84 million pesetas were spent on building primary schools (Hutchison 1997:92).

As Escriva's following grew, so did the criticism. Two young men who had attended a service at the new Jenner Residence alleged that there were cabalistic symbols in the oratory. Someone else complained to Rome that the oratory was the wrong shape (Hutchison 1997:95). Dominicans who were sent to investigate found no impropriety. Escriva's recruits were also accused of being masons, and nailing themselves to crosses. Copies of *The Way* were publicly burned. Opus Dei sources say the Spanish people were not ready for a message of personal sanctification through everyday work: they believed that sanctity was the business of priests and nuns. Escriva does not seem to have emphasised this message early on, however. He suspected, perhaps rightly, that the Jesuits were behind the opposition (Walsh 1989:45). He was following too closely in their footsteps.

The growing organisation still had no legal status in the church. On 14 February 1941 Escriva reluctantly obeyed an earlier order from the Bishop of Madrid-Alcala to register his undertaking as a pious union. This was the simplest of ecclesiastical institutions, a gathering of the faithful to do good works (Walsh 1989:47). The Bishop agreed to keep the new union's documents in his secret archives. Perhaps Escriva was afraid of imitators. His letter requesting recognition as a pious union marked the first occasion the name "Opus Dei" appeared on an official document.

In February 1942 Escriva, who had for years been operating across dioceses, was finally incardinated into the diocese of Madrid, bringing his work and himself under the control of the Bishop (Hutchison 1997:97). Undaunted, Escriva continued with his expansionist plans. 1942 also saw the opening of the first women's centre. Most of the first Opus Dei women were sisters of men who were involved with the Work, as the organisation was also called (Estruch 1995:113).

The membership was still modest, but Escriva needed help with the spiritual formation of his recruits. He could not be everywhere at once. Though his was a lay organisation, a status he always emphasised, he wanted ordained men to look after the spiritual needs of his people. He did not trust other priests (Walsh 1989:115-117). Another Valentine's Day

revelation came to him while he was celebrating Mass, this time in 1943. His lay organisation must have a branch formed of its own priests.

Alvaro del Portillo was sent off, flying through wartime hostilities, to seek the approval of Pope Pius XII. He was met by two young members who had been sent to Rome the previous year to study canon law and make influential friends (Hutchison 1997:98). Approval was granted, and on 8th December 1943 Bishop Eijo y Garay decreed the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross a corporate subsidiary of Opus Dei.

The celebrations were somewhat muted because of the recent death of Escriva's old friend and loyal disciple Isidoro Zorzano, who had been hospitalised for some months with cancer. Escriva's mother had also died by this time, and was buried, with her reinterred husband, in a crypt in the basement of the latest up-market residence, on the Calle Diego de Leon (Hutchison 1997:97).

Losing the odd "family" member was merely a temporary setback. The Work, as it was often to become known, was on its way. A few months after the Priestly Society became official, in June 1944, Bishop Eijo was already ordaining its first three priests. They had obviously begun their training years earlier in anticipation of the creation of a suitable society. One of the three was Alvaro del Portillo, already Opus Dei's diplomat, who was to become as well Escriva's confessor, soother and right-hand man, and the second leader of the organisation after the founder's death. Escriva surprisingly did not attend the ordinations. His job, he believed, was to "hide and disappear, so that only Jesus may be in the limelight" (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:58). The same page in his beatification profile, however, shows him kneeling to receive the newly ordained del Portillo's first priestly blessing.

It was around this time that Escriva was found to be seriously ill with diabetes (Berglar 1994:280). Photographs taken in his early 40's show a torpid, extremely stout and uncomfortable-looking man. He was at once put on daily injections, which barely managed to control the disease. Though he was to experience a "miraculous cure" in 1954, Escriva's body never recovered from the ravages caused by his diabetes. Oddly few seem to have connected his increasing temper tantrums, mood swings and general irritability with his physical condition.¹

Escriva doggedly continued with his divinely ordained mission, visiting Portugal 3 times in 1945 (Walsh 1989:53). The first student residence outside Spain was opened there, in Coimbra. Portugal was the only European country friendly to Franco, who was in disgrace for supporting the Fascist losing side in the war. Spain was isolated, banned from the United Nations and forbidden to fly in Allied air space. This did not deter Escriva from dreaming of opening centres soon in "enemy" territory. He was as usual operating far beyond his permitted diocesan boundaries, and had ambitions for something much grander than a simple pious union. He wanted standing and recognition within the Church.

Inevitably, del Portillo was sent back to Rome in an attempt to negotiate a more suitable status for his organisation. No amount of useful introductions helped this time. The Curia was not amused, and refused to co-operate (Walsh 1989:53). Opus Dei, still a tiny enterprise, was seen as having ideas above its station. Escriva had to journey to Rome himself to back up del Portillo. He undertook this trip, the furthest he had ever been away from home, by car and ship. Opus Dei legend-makers transformed this event into a marathon battle with the elements and the forces of evil as Escriva, the good Crusader, carried his standard to God's representative on earth (Estruch 1995:146-147). The Roman flat where the great man stayed with del Portillo and others had, says Bernal, a terrace that opened out onto St. Peter's Square. From here apparently it was possible to see the light in the room where the Pope worked. Escriva spent the whole of his first night in Rome out on the terrace in prayer (Bernal 1977:92).

Not all his prayers were answered. He had to wait days for his first audience with Vatican officialdom, and did not get a new upgraded status for his Work. Estruch outlines the confused question of whether del Portillo and Escriva were petitioning on behalf of the Priestly Society, the lay union of Opus Dei, or both (Estruch 1995:139-149). They did obtain some concessions, including the granting of various spiritual privileges or "indulgences," requested by del Portillo. One offered indulgences to members who kissed a plain wooden cross hanging in the entrance to their local oratory. These plain crosses, duly labelled, are to be found outside Opus Dei oratories even in New Zealand and Australia, where this type of devotion is rarely observed today. A document was also signed, expressing the Holy See's approval of Opus Dei's spiritual activities in Spain and beyond. Spiritual privileges were commonly granted to various Catholic groups. This was an encouraging sign that Opus Dei (and its priestly wing), though not yet receiving the degree of recognition Escriva wanted, was becoming an accepted part of the establishment (Walsh 1989:54).

Escriva returned to Spain a changed man. The sophisticated intrigues and complexities of church politics in Rome made him realise that an ostentatious piety coupled with a little cautious scheming was not enough to achieve his goals. "My children," he said on his return to Spain, "I have lost my innocence" (Walsh 1989:53).

History shows that Escriva was not really the naïve innocent ex-member Raimundo Panikkar depicted when sharing the above quote with Walsh. As Estruch points out, Escriva had already been a priest for 20 years, had survived the Civil War where thousands of his fellow priests died terrible deaths, had found himself various helpful posts, and had begun a small but thriving religious enterprise. Often he had operated "outside the rules" to obtain his required ends. His Roman experience opened his eyes and allowed him, Estruch believes, not the acquisition but the sanctification of scheming (Estruch 1995:140). If it worked for cardinals and bishops, it would work for Opus Dei. In the divine battle for souls – and the spread of the Work – the end justified the means.

In November 1946 Escriva returned to Rome, where he would make his home for the rest of his life. 1946 had been an eventful year. As well as obtaining some measure of Vatican recognition for his Work, Escriva had obtained two audiences with Pope Pius XII. In September 6 new priests were ordained, a fact rarely mentioned in official biographies, perhaps because one of them was to become Opus Dei's most famous defector – Raimundo Panikkar. Five women members arrived in Rome to take care of the first centre there (Estruch 1995:141).

Escriva appealed to the Vatican's fear of the Communism that had just swallowed up eastern Europe and was literally knocking at the Vatican gates. Italy seemed full of Communists and their sympathisers. Just as in Spain not so long ago, priests were being singled out and murdered. Every evening Communists actually took over the square before the Lateran Palace in Rome and addressed the crowds, offering rhetoric, music and free food (Hutchison 1997:102). The advancement of Opus Dei, with its "apostolate of penetration," said Escriva, would effectively fight back against the ever-spreading evil of godless Communism.

He had appeared at the right moment. Cardinal Montini, the only friend he had made in the Curia, helped him along (Hutchison 1997:103). The Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* was issued on 2nd February 1947. It provided a new juridical structure in the Church, to be known as the "secular institute." Through membership of this institute lay people could seek Christian "perfection" while continuing with their ordinary lives in the world. They would not have to retreat to a religious community and take the traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They would, however, have to take private vows and would be under the control of the Congregation of Religious in Rome.

Escriva and del Portillo immediately petitioned the Congregation of Religious to have Opus Dei declared the Church's first secular institute. It was important to Escriva to be first, and different. They obtained their decree, *Primum Institutium Seculare*, on 24th February 1947. Two months later Escriva was appointed a domestic prelate to the papal household, allowing him the title of "Monsignor" (Walsh 1989:56). This was as high as he was ever to rise in the Church. Though he always hoped to become a bishop, no one took the hint.

Hutchison describes the acquisition of the property in Rome's Parioli district that was to become the Villa Tevere, the lavish headquarters of Opus Dei (Hutchison 1997:104-105). He dismisses the tale of Escriva's handing over some gold doubloons as security until his impoverished secular institute could obtain a mortgage in the required Swiss francs. Hutchison, a former financial journalist, has lived in Switzerland for over 30 years. Such an arrangement, he says, was not only illegal but impossible: no Swiss bank would have taken on an Italian mortgage in 1947. The required cash was found somewhere – alterations and

additions to the villa went on for 12 years, and are estimated to have cost more than US\$10 million.

The period of true international expansion began as Opus Dei established itself in Rome. Members ventured far from home to start the Work in England, France, Ireland, Mexico, the United States, Argentina and Chile. These men were sent out into the unknown often with little resources or contacts. Progress was slow in some countries. After 4 years in England, only one recruit had come forward. This man was ordained a priest, but later became disillusioned and apparently mentally ill, and left Opus Dei (Walsh 1989:169). Americans were not overly receptive to the message either: there are still only a little over 3000 members in the whole United States out of an enormous Catholic population of over 62 million (Interview 20/2/1998).²

The well-funded Spanish CSIC opened a Roman office in 1947 to “aid Spanish research.” The 6 Spanish researchers then working in Rome were all members of Opus Dei (Hutchison 1997:105). In 1947 it was also decided to allow married people to join Opus Dei as “supernumeraries.” They were more loosely attached than the celibate ranks, lived in their own homes and continued with their normal work and family routines. They would accept spiritual direction from Opus Dei priests, and naturally aid the institute in spiritual and material ways. This gave a considerable boost to Escriva’s expansionist plans. He always had a use for more funds and personnel.

1950 was the next important year for Escriva and Opus Dei. On the 16th June Pius XII formally approved Opus Dei as a secular institute. The earlier document had allowed a temporary canonical approbation. Opus Dei now had 3000 members in all, including around 550 women and 23 priests (Walsh 1989:60). The rules were changed so diocesan priests who were attracted to Opus Dei’s spirituality and lifestyle could join as supernumerary members. They would continue with their normal work and remain under the control of their local bishop.

A year or two previously, Escriva had such concern for the “holiness and sanctification” of priests that he considered leaving the lay Work he had begun and setting up a new foundation just for priests in diocesan work (Estruch 1995:165). Allowing these men to be officially associated with Opus Dei solved the problem. Things settled down for a while.

Shortly after the Pope’s final approval was granted, internal dissension arose in Opus Dei. Escriva’s biographers mention this attempt to separate him from his Work, and to have a separate men’s and women’s organisation. They do not give the reasons for this behaviour, or explain who was behind it. The founder was deeply distressed, forgetting perhaps that not so long before he had been considering leaving Opus Dei behind in any case (Estruch 1995:166). Estruch suspects that Italian parents, disturbed at their children’s involvement

with Opus Dei, and encouraged by local Jesuits, may have been responsible for sending denunciatory documents to the Holy See.

Escriva's ambition continued to grow along with his organisation. Displeased that Archbishop Larraona had raised 70 other groups to the level of secular institutes, he saw himself becoming a prelate nullius. He had learned the implications of this term during his earlier study of the medieval Abbess of Las Huelgas, who was a powerful woman in her own right, ruling as "Mother and Prelate" (Estruch 1995:57). The title was, as Walsh explains, a medieval curiosity still sometimes employed in Europe. In the Middle Ages abbots controlled the land around their abbeys, and were entitled to hold their own courts. They had approximately the same power and status as a bishop within their own enclave, and could accept priests who lived elsewhere as associates (Walsh 1989:76). Escriva had been involved with a prelatura nullius during his chaplaincy days in Madrid. He was not, however, to get his wish. Both Pope John XXIII and Escriva's one-time supporter Paul VI, formerly Cardinal Montini, refused to consider another status for Opus Dei. It was to remain a secular institute for a long 35 years (Berglar 1994:310).

Expansion continued. In 1952 building of Opus Dei's own institution of higher learning in Spain, the University of Navarre, was begun in Pamplona. The following year a college for women's theological studies was founded in Rome, rather a surprise for those who saw Opus Dei women as accepting subservient, non-intellectual roles in the organisation. The men's theological college in Rome had been opened in 1948 (Berglar 1994:329).

Escriva began to travel around Britain and Europe, visiting members and inspecting sites of residences and colleges. Throughout his life he would remain deeply involved with students and their universities. He even dreamed of an Opus Dei college at Oxford, and designed a coat of arms. The college was to have a floodlit statue of the Virgin Mary perched on top of its clock tower. Escriva's proposal was rejected (Hutchison 1997:175-177).

On 27th April 1954 came the surprise "miracle" that cured Escriva of his diabetes. He was very ill at the time, and could never be sure when he went to bed at night if he would wake up in the morning. He had a bell by his bed so he could if necessary ring for extreme unction to be administered. On April 27th, shortly after receiving his usual injection of insulin, he collapsed, calling for absolution. Del Portillo attempted to give him sugar, thinking he was suffering from hypoglycemic shock, but his jaw had stiffened and he was unconscious (Bernal 1977:211-212). His colour changed alarmingly, and he seemed about to die. Before the doctor could reach the scene however, Escriva recovered consciousness, though he was blind for several hours. He would suffer crippling headaches and bouts of exhaustion for the rest of his life, but the diabetes was gone. True to his insistence on the sanctifying value of hard work, he was within hours busy at some task with the assistance of 3 women members.

Escriva's creation continued to flourish, in spite of defections, scandals and set-backs that occurred from time to time. It did especially well in Spain, its country of origin. Already by the early 1950's members headed one third of all Spanish university departments (Hutchison 1997:123). Other members were to become prominent in business and political circles.

On 9th October 1958 the ascetic Pope Pius XII, who had not always been as helpful as Escriva would have liked, died. Two weeks later the genial elderly Angelo Roncalli became Pope John XXIII. Though Pope John had some familiarity with Opus Dei – he had twice stayed in residences while visiting Spain – Escriva had to wait 18 months for an audience (Hutchison 1997:140). The proposed prelatura nullius had grown tenfold in a decade, now having 30,000 members and 307 priests. Unimpressed, John kept Escriva waiting nearly 2 years before declining to change Opus Dei's status.

In the meantime, to the consternation of conservative elements in the Church, John XXIII decided to convene an ecumenical council, the first in nearly a century. In the context of a church council, Opus Dei author Peter Berglar reminds us, "ecumenical" means "universal," not "interdenominational." "An ecumenical council," he explains, "is a worldwide gathering, summoned by the pope, of those men who, according to canon law, exercise authority in the Church" (Berglar 1994:243). Interestingly, the Vatican I Council had met in 1869-70 to define the doctrine of infallibility, "that freedom from the possibility of error in matters of revealed faith and morals, which Christ bestowed on the whole Church through the Spirit" (O'Collins & Farrugia 1991:105).

Cardinal Montini suggested a focus for the Council – examining the nature of the Church and considering how best to prepare for the challenges of the future. A new millennium was just 4 decades away, and the structures of the Church had changed little in centuries. It was time to "open the windows," as Pope John said, and renew the whole institution. Some writers claim Escriva was invited to take part in the deliberations of the Council and refused. Others do not believe he was ever considered (Estruch 1995:204). Del Portillo and a few other members had some involvement in the proceedings. John XXIII died during the Council, leaving his successor Paul VI to oversee the final sessions.

According to ex-member Maria del Carmen Tapia, Escriva spent the Vatican II years brooding. The Council was never mentioned. Tapia was forbidden to go to the Vatican to take part in the historical concluding celebrations, as the work in the house was "more important" (Tapia 1997:264). None of the 300 or so numerary women in the house went to the celebrations.

While Escriva was horrified at many of the proposed liturgical changes, the document *Pastoral Constitution Of The Church In The Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, shared his

philosophy of work not as a punishment placed on the human race after Adam and Eve's fall from grace, but as a natural and beneficial activity. "We hold," the authors wrote, "that by offering his labour to God a man becomes associated with the redemptive work itself of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labour when at Nazareth He worked with His own hands" (*The Documents Of Vatican II* 1966:275).

In succeeding chapters we will see a little more of what the findings of the Vatican II Council meant for Opus Dei and the Catholic Church in general. It was a time of great stress and confusion all round. Suddenly Mass was celebrated in local languages rather than the traditional Latin: Opus Dei priests at that stage continued to use Latin. The congregation had been bystanders for much of the Mass as the priest carried out mysterious activities with his back to them. Now altars were to be moved forward, with the priest facing the people and including them throughout the ceremony. Opus Dei altars stayed where they were (Walsh 1989:73). One that had been moved by an enthusiastic priest, Vladimir Felzmann, was put back, at considerable inconvenience and expense.

Theologian Karl Rahner believed that the Council actually signalled the beginning of a whole new epoch in Church history – that in which the "sphere of the Church's life is in fact the entire world" (Rahner 1979:721). From being an inward-focused organisation with much of its roots in Hellenism and European culture, the Church opened itself to "the world," now seen as part of God's beneficial creation. Life on earth was a divine gift, not merely a "vale of tears" that men and women must endure before moving on to their real home in heaven. There was also a new appreciation of the people of God, rather than the hierarchical institution, as "the Church."

Escriva exclaimed that he was living in a "time of madness" (Estruch 1995:202). Incredibly for one who professed such deep devotion to the One True Church, he apparently considered abandoning Catholicism and either forming another church in schism, or investigating a possible arrangement with Eastern Orthodoxy. Ex-member Dr. John Roche spoke of the nervous paranoia of the early 1970's as the Opus Dei hierarchy prepared its members for the possibility of schism (Hutchison 1997:145). They were reminded that schism was nothing new in the life of the Church.

Del Portillo pressed for a less extreme solution. A centre was set up in Rome where Opus Dei priests could meet with conservative Cardinals and discuss their concerns, assuring the Cardinals of their loyalty and support. One of the most responsive Cardinals was Karol Wojtyla of Poland, now Pope John Paul II. It had been rumoured within Opus Dei circles years before that Wojtyla had actually joined the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross (Hutchison 1997:148-149).

Escriva's health was declining. In 1966 he had developed high blood pressure and

kidney problems. He was now almost blind without his strong glasses, but kept this failing a secret from his “children” (Berglar 1994:280). The faithful del Portillo and others close to the founder helped him discreetly to function as well as possible. In spite of these setbacks he worked harder than ever, undertaking gruelling overseas trips to meet with supporters.

His visits were often filmed, showing him meeting with gatherings of admiring followers. He appears relaxed and good-humoured – in the released footage, at least – giving little hint of the true state of his health. In 1974 he made an extensive tour of South America. A 1975 visit to Central America was cut short when he became ill (Berglar 1994:330). His last trip, in May 1975, was to Spain. On 26th June, just a few weeks later, he became unwell in Rome while visiting women members. He was driven back to the Villa Tevere, where he collapsed and died of a heart attack. A priest who was also a doctor was unable to save him (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva* 1992:109-110). It was said he was gazing at a picture of Our Lady Of Guadalupe before he fell.

It was the end of the man, but just the beginning of the legend that was to grow, carefully nurtured, into the image of the Blessed Josemaria, beatified in spite of much protest, on 17th May 1992 by John Paul II, the Pope Opus Dei had long been waiting for. A Vatican source told Kenneth Woodward that not only did an enormous 40% of all the testimony supporting Escriva’s cause come from Opus Dei’s next two prelates, Alvaro del Portillo and Javier Echevarria, but unusually no publications critical of Escriva were presented at all to the officials examining his case (*Newsweek*, 18/5/1992:47). Under John Paul’s patronage Opus Dei was to enjoy a period of growing influence and power.

It is obvious even from this brief overview of his life that Josemaria Escriva was from an early age his own man. Ignoring boundaries, obstacles and the expectations of others, he forged ahead in response to the inner voice that urged him first into the priesthood and then to attract others to share his special vision. His Work developed gradually over the years as his understanding and influence grew, and as he attracted talented and influential supporters. Escriva was as Vladimir Felzmann told Michael Walsh both “hard and soft” (Walsh 1989:18). He had the fiery yet sentimental temperament of his people. Battling his personal demons through “discipline,” confession and prayer, he was hard on himself physically, and a hard taskmaster of others. A man of many moods, he could be humble, kind and charming. He could also change in an instant to a fearsome, shouting bully. Illness and personal worries no doubt contributed a great deal to this. He seems to have suffered from a variety of fears and insecurities, and never to have developed very successful coping strategies to deal with them (Tapia 1997:124-125; 269-270; 276-277; 313). With his insistence on supernatural aid as a remedy in so many situations, Escriva would probably not have seen earthly assistance as well as a viable option for solving many of his problems. He was a proud man, and confidentiality would be a major issue outside of the confessional.

¹ These behaviours, as any relative of a severe diabetic knows only too well, are outward signs of the damage being done to blood vessels and nerves throughout the body. The sufferer is usually lethargic and pale, prone to infection and sudden lapses into unconsciousness, experiencing pain in the extremities, disturbed vision and concentration; heart and digestive problems. It is surprising both that much biographical material scarcely mentions Escriva's illness, and that little is made of his unusual recovery. The fact that there is a credible medical explanation may have restrained his followers.

I consulted a School of Medicine diabetes specialist about the story of Escriva's sudden recovery, showing him published reports of the event. He could not of course offer a diagnosis without examining the patient and reading his medical file, but was able on the available evidence to make an educated guess. Escriva's condition, contracted in his early 40's, was diabetes of the number 2 type, formerly known as Mature Onset Diabetes. A small proportion of these sufferers, some 2 to 3%, never totally lose the ability to produce some insulin. Occasionally the pancreas manages to step up production without any prompting, and the patient's condition improves. These occurrences are not usually as dramatic as Escriva's collapse, but they are within the range of normal possibility (Conversation 21/3/2000).

² In 1973 John B. Snook, professor of religion at Barnard College in New York, predicted that Opus Dei would not become a significant movement in North America simply because it was an "intentionally elite" group with limited appeal. The type of character admired within Opus Dei was no longer an ideal in the wider society, and the organisation "took for granted" a traditional view of Catholic authority at a time when this was being questioned (Snook 1973:121-122).

Chapter 4

THE PERSONAL PRELATURE

In 1946 Opus Dei was so obscure it did not even rate an index mention in Ramos Oliveira's postwar *Politics, Economics And Men Of Modern Spain*. A decade later, it was already becoming a force to be reckoned with in Spain, not only in the fields of religious formation and education, but in politics, economics and the business world. By the late 20th century writers as diverse as Paul Theroux, David Yallop and Hans Urs von Balthasar were commenting in their various ways on the prelature. Once Escriva found some influential friends and generous sources of funds, he was on his way. "My children," he wrote, "we can honestly say that the anxiety and responsibility for the whole Church lies with us" (Berglar 1994:173).

Ironically it was Escriva's apparent shadow, Alvaro del Portillo, who became Opus Dei's first prelate when it was elevated in 1982 to the status, not of a prelatura nullius, but a prelatura personalis, the first in the world (Berglar 1994:330). Del Portillo was later to become as well the first director general appointed a bishop.

A personal prelature, canon law tells us, is "composed of deacons and priests of the secular clergy" (*The Code of Canon Law* 1983:Can.294). It may be formed to ensure an appropriate distribution of priests, or to fulfil special missionary or pastoral tasks. It does not encompass the whole spectrum of Opus Dei membership as the status of secular institute did. Both lay and clerical persons could lead a consecrated life within a secular institute (*The Code of Canon Law* 1983:Can.711). The rules laid down for personal prelatures make it plain that actually the much smaller and more recently formed Priestly Society of the Holy Cross has the membership that fits the criteria (Appendix G).

Lay people may "dedicate themselves to the apostolic work of a personal prelature by way of agreements made with the prelature" (*The Code of Canon Law* 1983:Can.296). There is no mention of even associate lay membership. So seemingly, in canon law at least, the much larger lay following of Opus Dei is excluded from full official participation in the prelature. This paradox is never really dealt with adequately in the official literature, where it is constantly emphasised that all members, regardless of lay or clerical status or social position, are equal within the organisation (Rodriguez, Ocariz, Illanes 1994:110). This claim is challenged by many commentators, who see no equal sharing of power and responsibility, and men having more freedom than women (*TIME International*, 18/5/1992:59; Tapia 1997:126-129).

It is also frequently stated that the Holy Spirit always led Escriva in the direction of this ideal solution to bring all states of people together as one (Berglar 1994:322;

Bernal 1977:40;145; Rodriguez, Ocariz, Illanes 1994:16). It took so long for the Church to set up the juridical framework, we are told, because Escriva was so far ahead of his time (Berglar 1994:309). But the issue is not that simple. A priest who was studying canon law at the time, in the early 1980's, told me his lecturer had seen the early drafts of the new Code. There was no mention of personal prelatures (Interview 10/2/2000). This small section of 4 paragraphs was added, it was understood, after Opus Dei had made a major contribution to aid the Vatican's faltering finances.

The paragraphs on personal prelatures may not have been included in the early drafts of the new Code of Canon Law, but the issue of personal prelatures was certainly included in the preliminary discussions. A priest with a doctorate in canon law showed me notes detailing 1981 official discussion on whether personal prelatures sufficiently resembled particular churches to be included in the same canons as the latter.

Personal prelatures were first mentioned in *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Vatican II decree on the ministry and life of priests. They were proposed in Section III, *The Distribution of Priests and Priestly Vocations*, as a means of ensuring an appropriate distribution of priests, and of carrying out special pastoral activities "on behalf of diverse social groups" (*The Documents of Vatican II* 1966:555). Priests were seen as assigned or incardinated in this way for the benefit of the whole Church.

After reading the section of Walsh's book on Opus Dei's constitution and the status of members, the priest mentioned above agreed with Walsh that technically the Opus Dei laity are not members of the prelate. He pointed out that, as stated in the Vatican II documents, priests are to be incardinated into a personal prelate "presumably for the benefit of an equitable distribution of clergy around the world, to the benefit of the local churches" (Letter 27/3/2000). He wondered how far service to the local churches featured in Opus Dei's plans.

Neither the supernatural or worldly version of events explains why the canons do not fully encompass all levels of membership, or how Opus Dei could regard these 1983 statutes as a perfect and "eternal" solution to their earlier juridical difficulties. As Walsh points out, priests are well-covered. They may be incardinated into the prelate just as "secular" priests are incardinated into a diocese (Walsh 1989:81). The laity, however, remain on the margins. In canon law they appear more as subject to the priests' pastoral care than recognised for their own vital apostolate.

The laity are contractually bound to the prelate. Vows or "promises" are renewed annually. Opus Dei's numerous canon lawyers seem happy with this arrangement. Members who are theologians and canon lawyers have written whole volumes on their prelate and its unique status within the Church. Spanish academics Rodriguez, Ocariz and Illanes,

quoted earlier, have authored a complex volume entitled *Opus Dei In The Church*. It is divided into 3 sections, one written by each expert, looking at the place of Opus Dei in the wider Church, at vocations, and at the “secularity” of Opus Dei. An even more complex account, *The Canonical Path Of Opus Dei*, has now been translated into English. It is regarded as specialist reading even within the prelature.

It is of concern to some Catholic authorities that members of the prelature are not fully under the control of the local bishop where they are based. A personal prelature is a kind of floating or world-wide diocese. Members are under the internal authority of their regional Opus Dei Vicar General, and then their Prelate, who lives in Rome. Opus Dei cannot establish itself officially in a diocese without the consent of the local bishop, but once it has opened a centre it is very difficult to close down the work (Walsh 1989:82). Members would have to commit some very serious misdemeanours before the local bishop could limit their activities, or remove them from the diocese (Interview 8/10/1994). Walsh reminds us that even if members of the Opus Dei laity worship and receive spiritual instruction exclusively within their own private centres, they are still technically members of the local diocese, and according to canon law under the control of the local bishop (Walsh 1989:85–86).

The issue of the governing and control of religious orders and organisations is a complex one which even many Catholics do not fully understand. A variety of rules and conditions govern a multitude of groups. Some orders have their central authority situated in Rome, no matter where they were founded (Edwards 1997:72;147). Others may have local autonomy to the highest level. Local bishops in fact often have limited control as well over members of religious orders operating in their diocese. Here too they may intervene in the order’s affairs only in cases of serious conflict or misconduct.

The Mercy order of nuns, founded in Dublin, offers an interesting example of local autonomy. Irish sisters were sent out to work all over the world during the 19th century. Today there is no “centre” of Mercy authority. The Dublin foundation house still exists, but is simply one community among many, with no special status. Each area has its own autonomous governing body and Congregational Leader (Interview 2/2/2000).

Opus Dei communities have a limited amount of independence. A male director, for example, cannot interfere with the running of a local women’s centre, which will have its own female leadership. However, as women directors have found, if they exhibit too much of a spirit of independence, they are reined in by the central leadership in Rome (Tapia 1997:244-249).

Though Opus Dei is most insistent about the “lay” or “secular” status of all its approximately 80,000 members – apart from the 1400 or so priests – Catholic commentators

believe that its celibate numerary members constitute religious orders in all but name (Walsh 1989:61). They are committed to life-long poverty, chastity and obedience, and live in community houses (Gould undated:2). They do not wear special distinctive clothing, but neither do members of most religious orders today, and they hold down secular jobs – as do many religious brothers and sisters, and even some priests.

Australian journalist William West – a member of Opus Dei himself – in his book of interviews repeats the claim that there are “no different classes among the members” (West 1987:186), that each person from the Prelate to the simplest housemaid is an equal participant in the life and spirit of the prelature. The roles differ, but the status, the charism, is the same.

All vocations may be equally valued by God, but in fact on earth there is a definite descending order of commitment and responsibility discernible within Opus Dei.

First come the numeraries, lay and ordained, the celibate members mentioned above who have a full-time commitment to Opus Dei, and live in private communities. Hutchison adds assistant numeraries as a sub-class, those whose role it is to cook and clean in Opus Dei buildings (Hutchison 1997:184).

Associates have also committed to celibacy and a life of service to Opus Dei. For a variety of reasons they usually live “in the world,” with their families or in their own private quarters. Opus Dei’s own priests are always chosen from the numerary and associate ranks of membership (West 1987:186).

Supernumeraries are involved in Opus Dei’s apostolate and live the Christian life as recommended by its spiritual directors, but they are not committed to celibacy. They may be married or single, and live in their own homes (Byrne 1984:9).

Confusingly, diocesan priests who wish to be associated with Opus Dei through the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross may according to some writers also be categorised as supernumeraries – or associates (Hutchison 1997:184). West calls them associate priests (West 1987:187). These men are of course celibate and live in diocesan quarters.

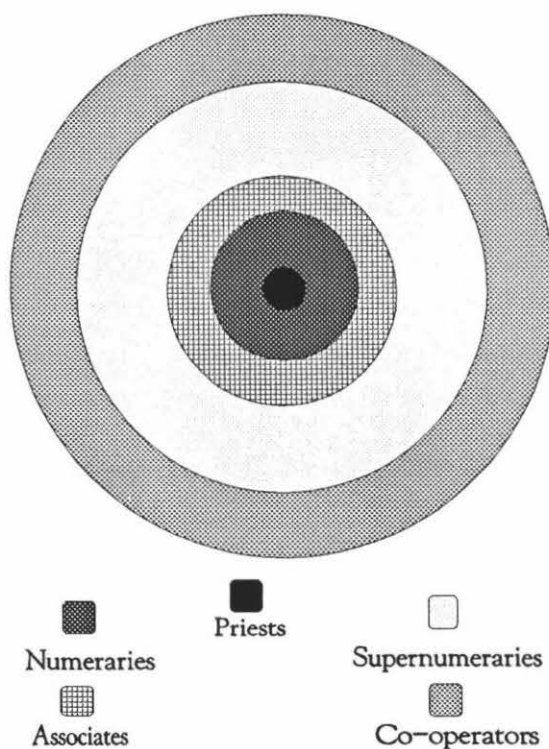
Non-members who wish to aid Opus Dei in any way are called co-operators. They may be of any religion, or none. Opus Dei is happy to accept any “spiritual or material” aid that may come its way, and often solicits support from the wider community, for example, when a new building project is planned. West writes of a Jew and a Chinese Presbyterian who are involved with Warrane College in Sydney (West 1987:160-161).

If the question arises, members from all categories will usually state simply that they belong to Opus Dei. We must remember however that the priests incardinated into the

prelature are actually members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, as are the diocesan priests who choose to share in Opus Dei's apostolate. Opus Dei itself, as Escriva never tired of emphasising, is a lay organisation (Bernal 1977:82; Rodriguez, Ocariz, Illanes, 1994:38-39). It appears all very complicated to the newcomer.

I see Opus Dei total membership as radiating out from a priestly core with the Prelate at its heart. This is a simple way to visualise the hierarchical order of the prelature, which is very like the Church structure with the Pope at its centre. It is, I feel, a less offensive visualisation than Dulles' hierarchical "triangle," with the Pope and the Curia sitting on top of everyone else.

The circles radiating from the core reflect the degree of exclusivity. Priests are the most exclusive and least numerous members. The more "detached" memberships are found in the outer circles. This diagram is not to scale.



The most powerful members of Opus Dei, predictably, are the priests, who regulate the spiritual lives of all other members, hear their confessions, and guide them through all aspects of life. Directors of Opus Dei centres also wield considerable power and influence, especially the men. Male directors may even advise the priests who live in their households on certain matters. Priests have no special privileges at home but must do their share of the household tasks, and keep their rooms tidy.

Women members prepare meals and clean male residences when the men are out. There is little contact between the two sexes. Any kind of friendship or socialising is strictly

forbidden. Male and female numeraries living in the same city may hardly know one another (Martin 25/2/1995:12; Kamm 3/1/1984:41). There are accusations that the prelature deliberately seeks out recruits for a special servant class, who will spend their whole lives with no hope of promotion caring for the more highly educated numeraries (Gould undated:1). In this part of the world, while some female numeraries with degrees have demanding secular jobs, others help out with the cooking and cleaning. There is also budgeting and administrative work to be done by the women as well as the men, and courses and seminars to be organised. Senior female numeraries give spiritual counsel to other women – with some priestly guidance in the background, of course.

Some of the highly trained women mix household duties with paid work, just as a married woman would, and as many nuns do today. From the early days of his organisation Escriva emphasised the importance of doing one's best at even the most mundane of everyday duties, of making "heroic verse out of the prose of each day" (Bernal 1977:220). Women could show their love of God and family by having their homes as neat and attractive as possible. Escriva sometimes flew into a rage at the sight of an open window, or an object lying where it should not be (Tapia 1997: 120-122). Women in large houses were often worked to the point of exhaustion trying to keep up the highest possible standards to please the Father and other authority figures. Escriva said he paid attention to small details like straightening a crooked picture on the wall because things should be looked after with a "manly care." "It is a question of doing things as a person in love does them" (Bernal 1977:322).

Male numeraries hold all kinds of paid positions in the community. They are usually highly educated, and may be university lecturers, doctors, scientists, journalists, engineers and so forth. Opus Dei priests are usually trained first as numeraries for a prestigious secular profession, before being selected for theological training as well. They may be selected by the leadership without having ever personally considered a calling to the priesthood. Their professional backgrounds impress young students, attracting further vocations. Once these men are ordained they give up secular work for good, no matter how talented they may be in their field, and concentrate on the sacred, especially in the spiritual formation of others. Escriva saw forming young men into celibate priests as his greatest achievement. "How we should admire sacerdotal purity!" he exclaimed. "It is their treasure. No tyrant can ever wrest this crown from the Church" (*The Way*, 1989:71).

As the founder saw Opus Dei itself always remaining "secular," part of the world and working for everyday sanctification in the world, male directors of centres are always chosen from among the celibate laity. These men do not cut themselves entirely off from their secular professions as the priests must, but they will have administrative responsibilities, and also will be helping the priests with spiritual formation. Under one and a half thousand

priests simply cannot take care of all spiritual activities for around 80,000 people, plus a steady stream of newcomers.

A priestly presence is always required from the start when a new centre is founded, or the work moves to a new area (Interview 25/1/1996). This is not just because the prelate prefers to have all its religious activities under one roof if possible, but because of the founder's special insistence on the therapeutic value of frequent confession. As Walsh points out, on occasion Escriva actually seemed to put confession before the Eucharist, which most Catholics would see as the heart of their spiritual lives (Walsh 1989:117). Priests often move into new areas in twos so they not only support each other but can hear each other's confessions. This practice is seen as unhealthily incestuous by most of the wider Church. Opus Dei, however, likes to keep everything "in the family" (Walsh 1989:115-116). "Yours should be a silent obedience," said Escriva (*The Way*, 1989:627).

Canon law clearly states that Catholics, lay or ordained, may choose any confessor they wish. Superiors of religious institutes and societies do have the faculty to hear the confessions of those in their care (*The Code of Canon Law*: Can.968:2), but only when the penitent approaches of his or her own free will (*The Code of Canon Law*: Can.630:4). Even cloistered nuns may choose their own confessor. Superiors are "forbidden in any way to induce the members to make a manifestation of conscience to themselves" (*The Code of Canon Law* 1983: Can.630:5).

This provision is regarded as an essential freedom. Some members of religious orders told me they preferred to go to an "outside" or neutral priest for confession, or reconciliation, as it is now usually termed. Others were happy to see whoever was available. The queues outside confessionals have greatly dwindled since Vatican II, many lay Catholics now rarely if ever availing themselves of this sacrament. It is still a binding obligation on all Catholics, but is often considered intrusive or simply un-necessary by today's more independent and better educated congregations (Collins 1986:243).

Interestingly, an Australian Opus Dei priest printed an article on the benefits of confession in the *AD 2000* magazine (Appendix L). If there is only one Opus Dei priest in the area, he will choose a "safe" local priest for reconciliation, one who will, he feels, be sympathetic to the ethos of his prelate. This is understandable enough: I have heard of people travelling miles to see a particular priest who will, they hope, have an informed understanding of their particular issues.

Once another Opus Dei priest arrives, the two will confess to each other. Members are told they have the freedom to choose a confessor, but if they attempt to consult an "outside" priest, even without confession, they are accused of having a "bad spirit," and being disloyal (*The Tablet*, 26/3/1983:288). Escriva was totally opposed to having his organisa-

tion's "dirty laundry" washed in public. He developed a siege mentality as he grew older, and for some reason did not trust "outside" priests (Walsh 1989:116-117; Gould undated:8).

The spiritual lives of numeraries and associates are as demanding as those of the stricter religious orders. Supernumeraries are more involved with ordinary family and secular life, but have religious duties as well, attending Mass daily if possible, having private devotions at home, confessing regularly to an Opus Dei priest, and supporting retreats, days of recollection, and other spiritual activities. An ex-member wrote that supernumeraries may be unaware of much that happens at the higher levels of the prelature (*The Milwaukee Journal*, 31/3/1984:page un-numbered). I have found this to be true. While chatting with married members at a retreat several years ago, I discovered they knew little of Escriva or the history of the prelature. They seemed to take a great deal on trust. Others, of course, were interested in finding out what they could, and read the Opus Dei-published literature that was available.

Numeraries give all their often considerable earnings to the prelature, and receive a modest allowance for personal expenses such as clothes and fares. Women numeraries are expected to be as attractively groomed as possible, wearing make-up and jewellery and fashionable clothes. Until recent years they had to wear long sleeves even in the tropics, and were not allowed to wear trousers. Numerary women dress "well without being luxurious," said Tapia, better than many upper middle-class women. She felt working class women would feel out of place in Opus Dei residences, except in a servant role (Tapia 1997: 194). Male numeraries dress modestly and neatly, melting into the crowd. Priests always wear the traditional black suit and clerical collar, and still in many parts of the world, a soutane as well.

All ranks of membership support the work both materially and spiritually. This is especially the function of the co-operators, who are not members of the prelature, but help out in a variety of ways, from serving on committees to helping with building projects, offering hospitality, giving cash donations, and praying for members of the prelature and their work. Some co-operators simply support Opus Dei because they see it encouraging good moral behaviour and standards of academic excellence. They know little of what happens behind the scenes.

It is often believed that any person who attends the occasional Opus Dei Mass or recollection, or is friendly with a few members, ranks as a co-operator. In fact, people are invited to join this rank, just as others must be invited to join Opus Dei itself, or the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. A prelature member sends a letter of recommendation to the Regional Vicar, and if the application is approved, the new co-operator receives an official certificate. Not everyone who wishes to be associated with the prelature is accepted at any level. Aspirants must be of good character and standing in the community. Young fit people

with the focus and ability to study to the highest level are preferred for celibate vocations. It is not true that Opus Dei targets only the children of the rich and powerful. A young person without money or connections will be encouraged if the right qualities are there. I have met high-achieving members from humble backgrounds. Prelature activities are also subsidised, so no one misses out on a course or retreat because of lack of funds.

Ex-members have accused Opus Dei of investigating potential recruits' previous lives. A person with a colourful sexual or criminal past would not be accepted for a celibate vocation, I was told, but could, if considered suitably repentant, become a rehabilitated supernumerary (Interview 22/8/1997). No one is rejected completely because of a sinful past. I spoke with supernumeraries who gratefully remembered the kindness and compassion of Opus Dei priests who helped them "return to the fold," come back to the Catholic Church, and then join the Work.

From the beginning Opus Dei residences and centres have been developed where possible in the better parts of town. There is a similarity in the interiors from place to place. Though the buildings seem lavish inside and out, much of the work is often done on a tight budget by members and supporters. Furniture, art work and so forth is often donated. Buildings are always spotlessly neat and clean, and often decorated with considerable artistic flair. "This really shows up our old halls," said an impressed mainstream Protestant friend who caught a glimpse of one residence. In this part of the world we do not see the excess that stunned New Zealand bishops who were invited to the Villa Tevere to meet current Prelate Javier Echevarria (Interview 2/11/1999).

Activities for interested outsiders may be held in student residences or other centres, even in the numeraries' community homes if they do not have other premises in the locality. All kinds of classes and groups may be held, catering from kindergarten age painting and craft activities to language classes or seminars on philosophy or history for adults. It is unfair to say that the sole purpose of these activities is to find new recruits (Schweninger, Malinoski, DiNicola, 17/6/1995:2). I have observed both priests and lay members organising and running groups largely for the pleasure of it, as well as to impart some specialised knowledge or skill to local people. There are outdoor activities as well, and in under-developed countries, literacy and vocational classes. Opus Dei opened the first inter-racial college in Kenya (West 1987:54).

On the other hand, I have also observed numeraries becoming anxious because they were not attracting sufficient vocations. Each member is supposed to have at least 15 friends as possible candidates for membership, and to be working hard on encouraging 5 at a time to join (Roche 1985:349; Valley 28/5/1995:page un-numbered).

Originally, as we have seen earlier, Escriva preferred young male university students

with connections, who would go on to positions of power and influence in the world. Young women were later selected too for their intelligence and family background. As time went by, however, and especially as the work moved outside the Spanish and Italian-speaking world, it was found that many young students were quite resistant to the call of Opus Dei. A rather sentimental Spanish spirituality that made huge demands on the individual was simply not their style.

As the Second World War retreated into history, the expectations of the young changed. They were better educated, and less willing to live by the standards of their elders. The summons to a life of sacrifice and holiness fell often on deaf ears. There was too much competition from “the world,” too many attractive rewards available in the secular professional life. After Vatican II, religious congregations also found it increasingly difficult to attract quality vocations in the numbers they had known before. Especially in the west, higher personal expectations were replacing the old sense of self-sacrifice and community responsibility. Many were also questioning both their personal beliefs and the role of the Church in the modern world (Edwards 1997:72-77; 148-153).

Opus Dei dealt with this problem by targeting a younger age group. Tapia describes how work was begun in Venezuela with girls aged 12 to 14 (Tapia 1997:208). It was important to Escriva to attract vocations before young people, especially girls, had been “marred in any way,” that is, had any involvement with the opposite sex. (Same sex relationships were, of course, much more difficult to detect and prevent). Boys and girls, separately, naturally, would be invited to attend various functions and join clubs catering for all kinds of activities that attracted that age group. These gatherings would take place at the weekends, or after school.

At the early age of 14 suitable candidates could, encouraged by their special numerary “friend,” write a letter to the local Vicar General, expressing interest in joining Opus Dei. The child’s parents often knew nothing of this. Opus Dei priest Fr. Andrew Byrne admitted in a letter to the English *Daily Mail* that teenagers who are keen to join the prelature may be advised not to tell their parents, because “the parents do not understand us” (*The Daily Mail*, 14/1/1984:14). One might wonder how Fr. Byrne could know in advance that the parents he had perhaps not yet met would fail to understand his apostolate.

It is true that throughout history parents have at times been disappointed and angered at their sons or daughters choosing a religious vocation (Walsh 1989:163). St. Francis of Assisi’s wealthy father was furious at his son’s turning his back on the comfortable world of middle-class commerce. St. Clare of Assisi had to “elope” to enter religious life (House 2000:133-134). When her young sister Agnes joined her, their uncle came with horsemen, attempting to storm the monastery and kidnap his nieces. St. Thomas Aquinas was imprisoned, according to legend, and pestered by a loose woman supplied by his brother, in an

attempt to make him renounce his vows. But as Walsh points out, no reputable religious order today would accept an under-age candidate without parental approval (Walsh 1989:165).

In 1981, after reading a newspaper article about Opus Dei, the late Cardinal Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, issued four guidelines for prelature members operating in his diocese. It was forbidden to offer any kind of long-term commitment to young people under 18, and those wishing to join should discuss the matter first with their parents, bishop or other suitable person. Individuals must be free to join or leave as they chose, and to have any spiritual director they wished. Opus Dei must also declare its interest when involved with activities in the Westminster diocese. The Cardinal emphasised that he was not criticising the integrity or zeal of members, but issuing safeguards for the protection of all (Walsh 1989:164-165). This document was welcomed by many in the wider Church, and is often quoted in discussions on Opus Dei. Some claim that members, while appearing to comply with the Cardinal's wishes, privately said he had given guidelines only, not orders, and they continued as before.

Another common complaint is that young people are accepted into Opus Dei without a full understanding of what membership entails (Gould undated:2). All will be gradually revealed – after they have made a commitment (Roche 1985:356). Some say they would never have joined if they had fully understood what was involved.

One would imagine that before committing to a religious vocation, “lay” or otherwise, the potential recruit would ask to see the “book of rules,” the constitution, to learn exactly what to expect as a member of that organisation. Can one commit even provisionally to a vocation without understanding clearly what that vocation requires?

Apparently many people can, and do, and sometimes regret it later. As we saw earlier, other Catholic groups also operate in this way, as of course do many sects and cults. “Revelation by instalment” is a useful tool for gradually easing a young person into a demanding new role. By the time the full extent of expectation and duty is revealed, the candidate may feel ashamed or afraid to protest.

It must be admitted that the constitution of Opus Dei is not the easiest document to obtain, and it is not studied by members in the way some groups such as the Jesuits examine their own rule (Walsh 1989:16; Martin 25/2/1995:10). The old Opus Dei Constitution was a rare document indeed. A copy of the 1982 version, however, was supposed to be presented to each bishop in whose territory Opus Dei was officially operating.

Walsh recounts the problems he faced in the mid 1980's just getting access to a copy when he wished to study Opus Dei. First he learned that only the chief or diocesan bishop of a territory would have a copy of the Constitution. Assistant bishops, even if they were in

charge of the area where Opus Dei actually operated, were not given a copy. Then the volume Walsh hoped to see disappeared. Later a photocopy of the entire document appeared on his desk at the college where he worked. After studying the document, he says, he was disappointed to find not a new form of religious life that enabled all kinds of people to share a healthy charism, but an organisation that, unlike most of the main Catholic orders, had become “increasingly priest-dominated, narrow in outlook and ultra-conservative” (Walsh 1989:16-17).

The Constitution – in Latin! – does appear in the back of the Spanish *Opus Dei In The Church*, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Some of the main points of the Constitution are listed in Appendix F. Walsh translates and explains the document in some detail on pages 85 to 105 in *The Secret World Of Opus Dei*.

ODAN, the Opus Dei Awareness Network, an American anti-Opus Dei organisation, was formed in 1991 as a response to parental concern at their children disappearing into the prelature. One of their chief complaints is that young people are “enticed” into Opus Dei through a display of excessive friendliness and attention. The children are then encouraged to become secretive and distant towards their natural families (*ODAN Newsletter* Vol.9, No.2:1999). Opus Dei is now seen as their spiritual or eternal family, with Escriva as Father, his long-deceased parents as Grandmother and Grandfather, and sister Carmen as everyone’s Aunt (Hutchison 1997:93). Photographs of natural relatives are strongly discouraged, but those of the late Escrivas are prominent in residences.

The material available from ODAN includes harrowing accounts of young people realising too late that they could not cope with the depth and severity of the commitment they had innocently made, and struggling to return to the outside world. Parents also recount how they fought to free their children from the prelature.

As *Sydney Morning Herald* religious correspondent Alan Gill points out, many of their recruits are intelligent, well-educated young people who are already legally independent adults. Often they seem quite happy with their choice. Do parents have the right to decide what commitment their adult children should make? (Interview 25/1/1996). While some are later grateful for their parents’ intervention, and adapt back well into ordinary life, others are deeply hurt by the lack of confidence and trust they see in parental interference, and choose to remain with the prelature. In these cases there may be a permanent rupture in the family relationship.

While members are so busy with the prelature’s affairs that there is little time for anything else, they are allowed to keep in touch with family and friends through letters and the occasional visit. It is not true that all ties are broken (Interview 15/7/95). If members serve abroad, there may be many years between visits, but they certainly do not forget

loved ones at home. They are simply, as religious have been for centuries, caught up in their primary vocation – doing what they see as God’s work on earth. There is an eternity later, they are reminded, to share with loved ones in heaven. The founder, of course, underwent a special “transition” to heaven on death (Walsh 1989:19).

If hard work was the sure path to salvation, Opus Dei members would certainly be well on their way to heaven. Numeraries have no holidays: their mission is too urgent. They are entitled to one half day’s recreation a week, and are expected to regularly go for a long healthy walk. Even on their “free” half day they are awake to apostolic opportunity. Priests for example may join the local clerical golfing or tennis fraternity in the hope of interesting others in the prelature. Opus Dei priests are allowed to smoke and eat out of it helps attract newcomers.

Not a minute must be given over to “laziness,” a member told me. They must get out of bed instantly on hearing a knock at the door around 5.40 to 6 am, and kiss the floor, silently repeating the motto “Serviam” (“I will serve,” as opposed to Satan’s “Non serviam”). Female members may at times have trouble leaping nimbly out of bed, as they sleep on boards, and once a week without a pillow as well (Tapia 1997: 45).

Cold showers are recommended for women, whom the founder saw as “more sensual” than men. Some centres have allowed the use of warm water for years, especially after a number of women developed medical problems. Men have normal mattresses, but must sleep on the floor once a week. During or after the morning shower is a convenient time to whip oneself with the knotted rope “discipline” while reciting a prayer. There is a limit to the amount of “discipline” members are permitted to inflict on themselves each week. If they wish to do extra penance, they must consult with the local director. This whipping, and other acts of “mortification,” are seen as a normal part of daily life even for a lay person. Escriva, says Berglar, simply “rediscovered” early Christian asceticism, which is “necessary for a more profound interior life” (Berglar 1994:222). New members were sometimes proudly shown the blood-spattered bathroom walls where Escriva regularly “disciplined” himself.

There is half an hour of meditation, with a priest if one is available. Priests call at women’s houses from the nearby male centres, and leave as soon as their official business is concluded. A daily Latin Mass follows the meditation. Each numerary centre is equipped with its own oratory. Public Masses are usually conducted in the local language by Opus Dei priests, but Latin is retained for internal worship.

Breakfast follows Mass, at around 7.45am. Now, or in the evening if one is going out early, is an opportunity to fasten on the cilice, the spiked chain mentioned in the previous chapter, which must be worn for 2 hours daily. Those working at home will carry out their duties while wearing the cilice.

Once a week each member must meet with the director for a “chat.” He or she will discuss personal progress and also look at ways to bring in new vocations. Potential recruits are discussed in detail.

Those going to study or work will now leave the house. Others continue with study or tasks in the residence. At noon the Angelus is prayed, and members have lunch, either in the residence or at their place of work.

Once a week a meeting called the “circle” is held with potential members. They listen to a talk on some spiritual topic, and must not raise any objections or ask questions. The Opus Dei “plan of life” is promoted, the schedule of prayers and regular activity undertaken by numeraries.

After work, there is half an hour of meditation before dinner, often involving a work of the founder. Dinner is served around 6pm. The rosary follows, and the Preces are recited, a collection of private Opus Dei prayers.

Classes and study follow. Students attend to their homework. All numeraries are expected to understand Latin, as the traditional tongue of the Church, and Spanish because it was the founder’s first language. Classes are held for those who need to learn, or to improve their basic knowledge.

At 9pm all in the house get together for a talk. Potential members are again discussed. No information confided in numeraries, no matter how private, is with-held from these discussions.

Examination of conscience comes next, and night prayers are said at 9.45pm. No one can stay up beyond 10pm without permission from the director. Members kneel by their beds with arms outstretched, recite 3 Hail Marys, and sprinkle their beds with holy water.

The daily routine of life in Opus Dei has been noted in various publications. This version is based mainly on Tammy DiNicola’s *A Day In The Life Of A Numerary* (1/7/1993) taken from ODAN’s web site. While there are of course some local variations, this schedule gives an accurate glimpse of the busy and highly ordered life of the numerary.

Many people wonder exactly how one does join Opus Dei. I have met a few supporters of the work who attend functions from time to time and presume they are then automatically regarded as members. Not so. Membership is by invitation only at all levels. Though the Opus Dei leadership claims that God provides the vocations (*ODAN Newsletter* Vol.9, No.1:3), they are quite definite about the qualities they seek. Young people who do not measure up in some way can beg all they like, but they will not be accepted (*ODAN Newsletter* Vol.8, No.4&5:5). On the other hand, desirable prospects will be pursued at length, sometimes even after they have made it plain they are not interested. Older persons

are sometimes admitted, but the founder pointed out that it is much easier to mould a younger, inexperienced person (Berglar 1994:103).

When a recruit is ready to “whistle,” that is, commit as a numerary, he or she is asked to write a letter to the current Prelate, asking to join. “Whistling” is the term Escriva used to describe the actions of a newcomer who has decided to move on from being a dead weight pulled along by others. The recruit is now out in front, a railway engine pulling new carriages for the prelature (Farrell 17/4/1992: page un-numbered). Often at this stage newcomers have a limited understanding of Opus Dei, but are full of idealism and enthusiasm, encouraged by the admiring and approving numeraries at their local centre. For the next 6 months this recruit will attend classes on the “spirit of Opus Dei” and the numerary vocation. They are then “admitted.” This is a brief ceremony where a priest and a lay director receive the recruit’s verbal agreement to “live the spirit of Opus Dei” under suitable direction (Tapia 1997:209-210). Accepting a vocation is seen as the natural response to God’s “generosity.” Wavering candidates may be told that the call comes only once in a lifetime.

A year of further training follows. Then comes the “oblation,” an oral contract of committal to Opus Dei. It is now difficult to change one’s mind and leave the prelature. Two years of study are now offered, on Opus Dei and the founder, church history, and of course training in Latin and Spanish. On each March 19th for the next 5 years, the candidate will orally renew his or her “contract” with the prelature. At the end of this period, the new member makes the “fidelity,” and becomes a full permanent numerary. At this stage members are encouraged to make out their wills in favour of Opus Dei.

DiNicola mentions that there seems to be some confusion among both newcomers and members as to exactly when a recruit may be considered an actual part of the prelature, with all the rights and obligations that entails. It seems that this discernment, like so much in Opus Dei, depends on the circumstances of the moment (*ODAN Newsletter* Vol.8, No.4&5:8). Those who have just “whistled” are sometimes treated already as full members. Even after the oblation there is, in fact, still more to learn about the requirements of Opus Dei.

If children of 14½ are accepted as “candidates,” they may “whistle” 2 years later, at 16½. The oblation would then come at 18, and at 23, the fidelity, committing them to Opus Dei for life. Once the oblation is made, it is very difficult to leave, and is considered a “grave matter.” This, according to traditional Catholic teaching, is a mortal sin if done with full knowledge and consent! (*ODAN Newsletter*, Vol.8, No.4&5:7). The *New Catechism* defines a “grave matter” as one specified by the ten commandments, such as murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, and failing to respect parents (*Catechism Of The Catholic Church* 1995:1858). It is interesting that when a member wishes to leave Opus Dei, the matter is seen first not as a spiritual or moral issue, but as the breaking of a contract (Interview 1/5/97).

Seeking holiness through Opus Dei involves all kinds of sacrifices, from loss of autonomy and even inner privacy to surrendering one's most cherished possessions. Friends and relatives of members are often not aware that any gifts they send numeraries usually may not be kept. As a discipline they are passed to another member who "needs it more." Each year on the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, the "Poverello," every member is expected to give up something precious as a symbol of poverty and detachment from material things. The special possession may be a long-cherished watch or piece of jewellery, a childhood treasure, or even something belonging to a deceased relative. The director of each centre may or may not decide to return these items to their owners (Tapia 1997:177). It was once common for candidates entering religious life to give up all material possessions, but this kind of ongoing "testing" of members is unusual and would be frowned on in most religious communities today. We must remember too that only Opus Dei priests are consecrated. All other members are part of the Catholic laity.

Over the years the prelature has amassed an enormous amount of gifts in the form of money, jewellery and property. When an audience with Escriva was granted, it was discreetly made known that a suitable gift would be appreciated. Tapia describes how local members would be encouraged to bring back something from the house on their rare visits home. If their families would provide clothing when needed, and pay travel costs, the prelature saved even more money. Once Tapia was "jokingly" told to ask a wealthy woman for her house. The woman refused, but gave Opus Dei a large cash donation instead (Tapia 1997: 190).

Until Vatican II, Opus Dei was in many ways fairly well in step with the rest of the Church. Practices that horrify outsiders today, such as forbidding members to return for stays in the family home, sometimes even when a parent is dying, censoring all mail, ordering people to work long hours without rest, using the "discipline" on oneself, and engaging regularly in the "confidence," or "manifestation of conscience," and the "chapter of faults," when members are minutely examined and criticised, were once a normal part of religious life.

When a man or woman entered a religious order they were seen as "dead to the world," belonging totally body and soul to Christ. Their lives consisted of work and prayer, usually in the company of other consecrated celibates. They had a higher calling that largely excluded them from the company of the "worldly" secular members of society, even their own relatives. Books such as Karen Armstrong's *Through The Narrow Gate* (1995) and Judith Graham's *Breaking The Habit* (1992) vividly describe this almost vanished world.

Opus Dei continues with much pre-Vatican II practice – and imposes these old customs of religious orders on thousands of men and women who are, it insists, members of the laity. To take just one example, the manifestation of conscience, discussing one's deepest thoughts and impulses with a spiritual director, was banned by the Church over a cen-

tury ago, in 1890 (Walsh 1989:114). Even in those much more controlling days it was considered too open to abuse - when practised once or twice a year, not, as in Opus Dei, every week. Members have to discuss their most intimate issues not with a trained priest bound by the confidentiality of the confessional, but their lay directors.

To see how common or otherwise Opus Dei practices are in the wider Catholic world today, I spoke to members of 8 well-known religious orders and societies operating in this part of the world, 4 male and 4 female branches: Columbans, Franciscans, Marists, Dominicans, Mercies, Sacre Coeurs, Sisters of Compassion and Mission Sisters.

All orders I examined but one were founded outside this part of the world. Some are medieval in origin, while others have been in existence a mere century or so. I questioned members of the 8 groups about such issues as training procedures and chain of command, recruitment, elections, leadership, general accountability, personal freedoms, holidays, and procedures for dealing with internal dissent.

While carrying out this research I actually had the opportunity to witness both priests and nuns in the process of leaving religious orders and societies. As well, I met an ex-brother who had returned for a friendly visit and lunch with the order he had left some years before.

In all cases there was a regular change of leadership from the top down, with former leaders sometimes moving into very humble new roles. All members had a say in choosing leaders at local level at least. There were clear-cut procedures in place for dealing with complaints, dissension and cases where members were unhappy and wished to leave, either to move into diocesan work or out of religious life altogether. In all cases but one that I observed, the departing brother or sister was treated with dignity and respect. A "period of discernment" was usually offered, during which counselling was available, before a final decision was made. Financial and other assistance was given to help the ex-member get established in a new life, and a friendly supportive relationship remained. Naturally there was an air of disappointment and loss on both sides, but there was none of the bitterness and animosity reported by many ex-members of Opus Dei. Maria Tapia's whole book *Beyond The Threshold* is the story of her gaining a new identity through life in Opus Dei, and then losing it again when she was expelled for being "too lenient" as a director in Venezuela. Theologian Raimundo Panikkar is so traumatised by his departure from the prelature many years ago that he now refuses to discuss it. He would not respond to my invitation to comment on published versions of the event. Though no doubt many departures are less dramatic than those that come to public notice, the number of difficult cases noted in ODAN newsletters and other sources is a cause for concern. Having given everything to their vocation, members often have to start again with very little support.

Candidates for the religious orders I investigated had ample opportunity to find out exactly what to expect, and to know what was expected of them as well, years before they could be received as members. While “enquiry evenings” were sometimes held and advertisements taken out to attract interest, there was no aggressive pursuit of young people to swell numbers or impress other groups. It was felt that a true vocation would find its own way to the order. Though there are few novices in New Zealand and Australia today, not everyone who applies is accepted. The life, though little resembling that in Opus Dei, is still a rigorous one, requiring application and considerable emotional and physical stamina.

All members are entitled to regular days off and annual holidays. Those working away from their own country are given lengthy holidays at home every few years – if they wish to have them. They are also sent home for family funerals and to be with dying parents. Leisure activities are encouraged, if the member has the free time. All may wear ordinary clothing, perhaps with just a small badge bearing the emblem of their order. Some members, usually older ones, prefer more traditional dress. There may be special garments for sacred and formal occasions, such as the Franciscan friars’ brown habits.

Members were expected to dispose of any personal property such as real estate, shares, and bank accounts on entry – the traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience still stand. This property could go to anyone at all – the order certainly did not attempt to claim it. Members must make a will, but are free to leave any further possessions they may have to whoever they choose. Those working in secular employment hand over their salaries just as Opus Dei numeraries do, and are given enough money to cover personal expenses. The salaries are used to run the religious houses and support those who work without pay. There are no large amounts of money regularly siphoned off to Rome.

In common with all human communities, religious orders have their scandals and tragedies. I heard of the overseas superior who was killed by a blow from a frying pan, the sad priest who hung himself from the rafters in the house where I lived, and the student priest who moved into the convent grounds to take notes and left with two nuns. Some scandals were soon suppressed and forgotten. Others caught the public imagination, grew, and became legend.

From the earliest days Opus Dei and its founder suffered from gossip and scurrilous imaginings. Joan Estruch heard all kinds of stories, but refused to include them in his investigation of Opus Dei because there was no proof one way or the other (Letter from Joan Estruch, 3/3/2000). Some accusations, such as those of cabalistic practice and Spanish members nailing themselves to crosses are obviously nonsense. Raimundo Panikkar and Maria Tapia would say the same of charges of sexual impropriety levelled at them by the leadership when they declared their independence (Walsh 1989:166-168; Tapia 1997:286-292). Members who wish to leave are often accused of being sexually or psychologically

unsound – which probably says more about the preoccupations of the accusers than the behaviour of the accused (Roche 7/9/1982:7; Walsh 1989:166-170; *ODAN Newsletter* Vol.7, No.4:3).

Opus Dei has had its “little” scandalous upsets, such as the case of the Portuguese regional administrator arrested in a Venezuelan hotel with suitcases of money and jewellery, after a complaint from a prostitute. According to Hutchison, he was returned to Spain, and after a stint in an Opus Dei-run psychiatric clinic, disappeared into obscurity in Argentina (Hutchison 1997:177).

Much larger scandals involving members made world headlines. The first involved the Matesa company, which was founded in 1956 and employed 2000 people, as well as controlling 75 other businesses. Its chief executive, Juan Vila Reyes, was trained at an Opus Dei business school. When the company collapsed in 1969 and Vila Reyes was sentenced to prison for fraud, other Opus Dei-connected men were implicated. Vila Reyes had apparently also given substantial sums of money to help finance Escriva’s enterprises, but a government enquiry was unable to establish exactly how much (Walsh 1989:145-146).

The next disaster came in 1983 when Rumasa, one of Spain’s largest business empires, collapsed. It owned 18 banks, and had 245 companies under its control. Its founder, Jose Maria Ruiz-Mateos, came from a family which had run a sherry business since 1857. Ruiz-Mateos fled to London when his business collapsed, but he was later arrested and returned to Spain. Though he denied being a member of Opus Dei, Hutchison says he and his wife joined in 1963 (Hutchison 1997:230). Walsh writes of Ruiz-Mateos having a picture of Escriva in his cell, and being visited by members who threatened to expel him from Opus Dei (Walsh 1989:147). He was later to admit that he was required to provide large sums of money to support projects of the prelature’s - and he had bank documents as evidence (Hertel 1987:102).

Ruiz-Mateos was linked to the next financial collapse where Opus Dei was involved. He used the Nordfinanzbank in Zurich, whose chairman served on the board of the Limmat Foundation with 4 members of the prelature. The Nordfinanzbank also had shares in the world-wide banking network of the ill-fated Roberto Calvi. In 1982 the Banco Ambrosiano, headed by Calvi, went bankrupt. It was Italy’s largest private bank - and the IOR, the Vatican bank, was its largest minority shareholder. Calvi, like Ruiz-Mateos, fled to London – but he did not survive the experience. His body was found hanging from scaffolding on Blackfriars bridge in London. Calvi’s son Carlo began gathering and examining documents relating to the financial collapse. He found that earlier Vatican denials of knowledge of and responsibility for certain transactions were false. Not long before Roberto Calvi’s death he told his family that Opus Dei was helping him sort out the Vatican Bank’s problems (Hutchison 1997:250). Financial journalist Larry Gurwin, who wrote a book about the

collapse, believes that the whole truth may never be known (Gurwin 1984:172). Calvi took many secrets with him to the grave, and left an incredibly tangled trail of financial dealings and misdeeds. Almost 40,000 investors in the Banco Ambrosiano were left with worthless shares.

These financial collapses brought to public notice the incredibly complicated international network of financial, professional and social relationships in which Opus Dei was involved. Escriva would say, of course, that since members' decisions in business, political and other activities were made with the "same freedom" enjoyed by other Catholics, the prelature was not "responsible for the professional, political or economic activities of any of its members" (Flader 1983:430-431). A cynic could see this disclaimer as the perfect "way out" for Opus Dei. If the member's entrepreneurial efforts are successful, everyone reaps the benefits. If he fails, he takes the blame alone.

Not only lay members are called on to help keep the prelature's finances flowing. Maria Tapia recounts how she was asked to wear a pouch hidden under her skirt when she travelled from Spain to Rome. Under no condition, she was told, was she to remove it or tell anyone else of its existence. Imagining it contained private documents relating to the Work, which must be handed to Alvaro del Portillo in person in Rome, she obeyed. To her horror, she found later that the pouch was stuffed full of thousands of American dollars. She had unknowingly illegally crossed the borders of 3 countries carrying this currency. Now she believes that many such "discreet" movements of funds took place (Tapia 1997:104-107).

Opus Dei sees itself as the "sacred, immaculate remnant of the true Church," "holy, pure and unchangeable" (Hertel 1987:99-100). Its founder wrote of the "three great stains" that pollute the world: the spreading red stain of Marxism, the liberalising stain of "abandoned sensualism, even madness," and the stain that removes faith from public life (Hertel 1987:101). The end justifies the means in this "holy war" for souls. Opus Dei's gallant caudillos have the right to, in "holy intransigence," use any modern secular means at their disposal to spread the power and influence of God's own organisation on earth. The problem is that human rights and laws may be violated in the process, and vocations are won, not primarily for God or the Catholic Church, but for the prelature of Opus Dei. "Who does not hunger to perpetuate his apostolate?" said Escriva. "That burning desire to win fellow-apostles is a sure sign that you have really given yourself to God" (*The Way*, 1989:809;810).

As we have seen, Opus Dei is one of many reformist groups that sprang up last century within the Catholic Church. Its founder built on what earlier groups had done, as organisations such as Communion and Liberation and the Neocatechumenate no doubt later drew some of their inspiration from Opus Dei. From the start Opus Dei was in competition and serious strife with the Jesuits, who also sought to attract society's elite as members and sponsors. Ironically the Jesuits, once the "Pope's men," are now committed to liberation

theology and often in trouble with John Paul II (*The Bulletin* 19/7/1983:68). He is more approving of Opus Dei and its “unchangeable” traditional stands, though some feel the prelatore’s peak of influence within the Vatican has passed.

Opus Dei has attracted much criticism from its beginnings. Today it is accused by many Catholic commentators of having a backward-looking, pre-Vatican II mentality, of targeting rich, intelligent and often under-age young people as potential recruits, infringing members’ human rights, and engaging in secretive, possibly illegal activities (Roche 1985:349-358; Vallely 28/5/1995:page un-numbered; Kamm 3/1/1984:38-41; 75;84-85). It has, however, a loyal following of around 80,000 members world wide, most of whom seem to cope well with a demanding lifestyle. To date it remains the Catholic Church’s only personal prelatore. According to present canon law, only priests and deacons can actually be members of the prelatore. while the rest of Opus Dei’s membership may be contractually bound to the Work. Other Catholic groups aspire to personal prelatore status as well, and will keep on pressing their cause. It seems that if the Work is to remain both unique and internally all-embracing, another juridical solution may yet be needed that will see all members equally situated in canon law within the boundaries of some new form of *ecclesiolae* in *ecclesia*.

Chapter 5

OPUS DEI IN AUSTRALIA

Members of Opus Dei arrived in Australia during the Vatican II deliberations. 1963 was a momentous year around the world. The Profumo scandal occupied the British press. English journalist Kim Philby was unmasked as a Soviet spy, and fled from Beirut to the USSR. A nuclear testing ban agreement was signed by the United States, USSR and Britain, but the Cold War tension continued. There were race riots in the United States, and Martin Luther King was arrested. John F. Kennedy, the most popular president the United States had seen for many years, was shot, allegedly by Lee Harvey Oswald. Kennedy's assassin was in his turn soon to be shot by Jack Ruby, who was already dying of cancer when he made his fatal move.

As far as the Church went, 1963 brought both hope and gloom. The first session of the Second Vatican Council had ended after 36 meetings. Many bewildered Catholics were wondering just what had been achieved by the expenditure of so much time, trouble and money. It was a "new and original approach," said Bishop Joyce of Christchurch (*Zealandia*, 3/1/1963:1). Not only had the youngest African bishops the same rights in decision making as the most venerable cardinals, but observers from other churches were amazed at the quality of facilities freely made available to them. Sadly the hugely popular John XXIII was to die of a stomach tumour and peritonitis on June 3rd, before the Council reconvened.

Life was hard for many Christians around the world. A report from the USSR claimed that around 2000 mostly Russian Orthodox churches had been closed over the previous 2 years by the Soviet government. Ten thousand churches remained open. In 1916, the year before the outbreak of revolution, there had been 78,000 Orthodox churches alone operating (*Zealandia*, 17/1/1963:1).

Three Spanish priests who had been captured by Castro's forces during the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961 were among over 1000 invasion prisoners released and airlifted to Florida (*Zealandia*, 10/1/1963:1). They had been offering Mass daily where they hid in a swamp until they were captured. In prison they celebrated Mass with smuggled altar bread, using a broken glass jar as a chalice.

Auxiliary Bishop Zygmunt Choromanski of Warsaw told a congregation of 3000 at a New Year vigil service that 1962 had been a "sad year for the Church" in Poland. Eight Catholic educational establishments had been closed, as well as hundreds of kindergartens. Nuns were dismissed from the hospitals where they worked. The Bishop declared that without the return of religious freedom to Poland there could be "no talk about a concordat" between Poland and the Holy See (*Zealandia*, 17/1/1963:5).

In 1961 the number of Catholic converts in England and Wales fell to 14,174, the lowest figure since 1957 (*Zealandia*, 10/1/1963:1). Perhaps a recent Russian discovery had caused some backsliding. Moscow Radio announced that infant baptism could cause “irreparable damage” to child health. Russian citizens were now living twice as long as they had before the revolution, when most people were baptised (*Zealandia*, 14/2/1963:2).

The Church and the secular world, the sacred and profane, were seen by Catholics as so removed from each other, so opposite in goals, principles and way of life that the differences could never be reconciled. For the sake of their immortal souls, the young must be sheltered from “the world.” The 1964 New Year editorial in the Australian *Catholic Weekly* spoke of the unfortunate tendency of “thoughtful and good” Australians to remain silent while the “irreligious and amoral” grasped every chance to publicise their liberal views. The writer went on to say, “Public immorality and the temptation of youth have not yet caught up with some supposedly more ‘enlightened’ countries overseas. One big prayer for 1964 would be that we never do” (*The Catholic Weekly*, 2/1/1964: page un-numbered).

Today the writer would find Catholic attitudes in Australia, as in most of the rest of the world, changed almost out of recognition. Only in a few pockets of resistance are the traditional values, rites and ways of thinking preserved. The Pius X Society, Ecclesia Dei and Opus Dei form some of these centres of traditional Catholicism – and out of these three Opus Dei would be the most “open.” It is still in full communion with Rome, and has to some extent accepted the reality of the Vatican II changes, unlike the dissident Society of Pius X, and it does not, like Ecclesia Dei, press for the Latin Mass to be restored in parishes on a daily basis.

The first Opus Dei members arrived in Australia as John XXIII was dying, and Catholics were recovering from the excitement and upheavals caused by the first series of Vatican Council meetings. According to Australian journalist William West, Dr. Ron Woodhead, an engineering professor at the University of New South Wales, came across Opus Dei in Boston during a 1960 visit. He wrote to Escriva, suggesting that he send some members to work in Australia (West 1987:162).

This could not happen, however, until Opus Dei was officially invited into the country by Cardinal Norman Gilroy of Sydney. After much correspondence, American priests Frs. Chris Schmidt and Jim Albrecht became the first members to settle in Australia. They arrived on 25th May 1963. Five laymen from Spain and the United States followed. They rented a house in Silver Street, Randwick, and began offering spiritual activities, as usual aimed mostly at those with university connections (West 1987:163).

Cardinal Gilroy offered the group some land in High Street where stables had stood. The members soon attracted a few supporters who helped raise the funds for Opus Dei’s

first building project in Australasia. The Nairana Cultural Centre opened in 1965. Following the usual pattern successfully adopted in other countries, it offered classes to high school pupils who planned university careers. Tutoring young pupils, we will recall, was one of Escriva's ventures in his own student days.

One ten week course offered in Sydney ran from 14th December to 27th February, with weekly classes meeting from 7 to 9pm. Subjects studied included motivation, exam preparation, taking notes, writing reports and term papers, and use of the library.

While some Australian Catholic schools had excellent facilities that rivalled anything Opus Dei could offer, an elderly Christian Brother who was teaching at the time told me that other schools were resource-poor in those days (Interview 12/2/1998). They operated on a modest budget, and were mostly staffed by members of religious orders, giving their services free or in exchange for a very modest salary. Families were larger than they are today, with many parents struggling to pay the required fees and expenses. Only gradually were such facilities as school libraries becoming available to these schools through federal government grants.

Opus Dei's thorough and professional approach to study even at high school level – and their ability to attract influential and wealthy sponsors – must have been encouraging both for students and parents with whom they came in contact. It seems the earliest members were largely regarded at first as simply providing a welcome boost to the spiritual and academic life of Catholic Sydney. From the start their intention was to provide both “religious and professional formation” (Letter of Fr. J.W. Albrecht to Cardinal Gilroy, 29/1/1964).

In 1965 the first women members arrived from Spain, South America and the United States (West 1987:163). The Nairana Cultural Centre was eventually transformed into the Creston residence for women. Interestingly, while West names the first priests in Australia, and all 9 living in the country when he wrote his book in 1987, he does not identify either the first women to begin the work locally, or the first laymen to follow the priests. “Better to burn like a hidden torch,” said Escriva, “setting fire to all that you touch. That's your apostolate: that's why you are on earth” (*The Way*, 1989:835). Members are expected to live and die in anonymity, giving all credit to the founder and his divine inspiration. Priests by the nature of their vocation cannot help being public figures. Possibly they are named so interested persons can get in touch after reading West's book. Or is it simply that priests are after all regarded throughout Opus Dei as the “elite corps” of the organisation, deserving of special mention?

“Marriage is for the soldiers and not for the General Staff of Christ's army,” said Escriva (*The Way*, 1989:28). He reminded followers that “a Priest is ‘another Christ.’ And.... the Holy Spirit has said: *Nolite tangere Christos meos*. Do not touch my Christs ”

(*The Way*, 1989:67). If old age deserves veneration, he declares, “think how much more you ought to venerate a Priest” (*The Way*, 1989:68). Members of the clergy suffering a crisis of identity or vocation in the mid 1960’s during the post-Vatican II upheaval would certainly feel encouraged by the sober attention and respect ordained Opus Deists received, and indeed still receive, from their fellow workers. I have to say here that in my limited experience Opus Dei priests have shown a modest, caring attitude towards others, often emphasising their vocation as one of service to others. They too believe it is their role to quietly do their best and disappear unheralded from the scene.

The first group in Sydney intended from the start to open a residential university college. Cardinal Gilroy was happy with this ambition. He visited one of the Opus Dei international residences in Rome, and wrote that he was “very pleased with the spirit of the people in the residence and the work Opus Dei is accomplishing there” (Letter to Fr. J.W. Albrecht, 3/3/1964). The University of New South Wales provided the land for what became Warrane College for male students, opening in 1970. Its first chaplain was Barcelona-born Fr. John Masso, now Regional Vicar of Opus Dei.

A 1974 incident at this college is often mentioned in articles on Opus Dei. On June 5th a group of students whose leader was dressed as Satan marched on Warrane, carrying a black coffin inscribed “Opus Dei RIP.” A mock exorcism was carried out (West 1987:155).

The demonstrators also burned an effigy of the Master of the college, Dr. Joe Martins, and demanded that he come out to discuss their concerns. When he refused, they took over a room in the Chancellory building and debated with the acting Vice-Chancellor (West 1987:156). They wanted Opus Dei removed from Warrane College – in spite of the fact, says West, that most Warrane residents did not support the protest.

The basic problem was a clash of ideologies. The student paper *Tharunka* was energetically anti-authoritarian and in favour of sexual freedom and experimentation. It criticised Opus Dei’s rules that forbade students to have women in their rooms, banned pornography, and encouraged religious observance – surely not too surprising in a Catholic college. Warrane, interestingly, is not even the only “religious” college on campus. Its neighbours New and Shalom are Anglican and Jewish.

As West points out, the major student protests were over by 1974, and the radicals of New South Wales needed an issue to crusade against. Lapsed Catholics on the campus were also probably discontented with Opus Dei’s stand. The students were testing their strength against the administration (West 1987:157). The issue was modestly covered by Sydney newspapers, (for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6/6/1974:21), and some correspondence-debate took place.

There was another, larger issue at stake. The protesters accused Opus Dei of having a

hidden agenda – of using its position to unduly influence the university administration, and to establish itself secretly in positions of power (West 1987:158-159). A committee of enquiry was established and began deliberations on July 8th, 1974. The Vice-Chancellor, various academics and a Supreme Court judge served on the committee. They listened to both sides of the debate, and found that as the college existed, at the university's invitation, to “promote education and the development of character in accordance with the principles and ideals of Christianity,” its aims were “proper and deserving of support” (West 1987:158). No evidence was found of undue influence or infiltration of the university system.

Walsh mentions reservations expressed by the committee but not included in West's account (Walsh 1989:66). It was noted that students were pressured to join Opus Dei, and had newspapers and television censored. Warrane had a much greater turnover of students than other colleges. Many young people came into Sydney from country areas, and knew little of Opus Dei before they moved into Warrane.

Journalist Alan Gill, who visited Warrane several times in the 1980's and early 1990's, found a relaxed family atmosphere there. The Master eats with the students, encouraging them to regard the college as a second home. Gill found the quality of the fittings “extraordinarily high” compared with other university colleges. It certainly is less stark than some colleges I have known, but I would not consider the furnishing quite in the “lavish” category. In fact, in the mid 1990's I found the whole place, while tastefully furnished and scrupulously neat and clean, a little battered around the edges compared to the women's residences. This was due no doubt to the high spirits and energy levels of the residents who sometimes, I was told, played basketball in the corridors.

Today not all the students are Catholic or Australian. Some are placed in the college by parents who like Warrane's strict standards and prefer to have their children in a quiet, well-supervised environment. Others choose Warrane because of its emphasis on academic excellence. Overseas students may come from non-Christian faith backgrounds, or not have any involvement with religion at all. The college has traditionally been very much an all-male preserve. In 1983 the just-retired Master of neighbouring New College told Alan Gill of the two nuns staying temporarily at New, who were refused admission to the Warrane chapel because of their sex (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 17/2/1983:7). Things are a little more relaxed today, with women permitted to attend Mass, and to enter “open” areas such as the library, snack bar and tutorial rooms. Mothers have for many years been able to visit sons in their rooms (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/2/1983:7). On the whole, however, male-female relations remain distant and “discreet,” with women staff coming in to service the building when the residents are out.

Hospitality students from Opus Dei's small but select Kenvale College gain practical work experience by attending to many of the cleaning, kitchen and laundry duties at Warrane.

Though they receive a modest wage for their labour, some have claimed that Kenvale exists simply to provide cheap servants for the privileged male staff and residents (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/2/1983:7). In fact, Kenvale, founded in 1971, is an extremely competent and professional training ground for young women planning a career in the tourism and hospitality industry. As Kenvale's publicity brochure points out, this industry is both Australia's largest export earner and the world's largest employer. Graduates of the college are in great demand. Women not only prepare for a career, but learn to be competent housekeepers and hostesses. They are also encouraged to participate in personal development activities, spiritual formation, and sports. Students are prepared to go on to a university degree if they wish. Like other establishments run by members of Opus Dei, Kenvale was set up by a group of interested lay people. According to the brochure, it is "a project of" a company called Education And Training. Students are recruited through personal contact and parish visits by prominent members of Opus Dei (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/2/1983:7).

Many Kenvale students board at Warrane's sister college, Creston, which was founded in 1970. Creston has the same mix of students as Warrane, with a limited number having Opus Dei backgrounds. As well as providing a home for students, Creston acts as a study centre for young women who want some extra tutoring. Various numeraries and others help with these classes. This college is less well-known in Sydney, and has not attracted the same controversy as Warrane.

Opus Dei also runs a mentoring programme, where students at both high school and college level are chosen to spend time with a slightly younger student of the same sex. Mentors help with homework and study difficulties, give advice, and act as positive role models. They are also ideally situated to encourage their young friends into Opus Dei's spiritual activities.

Sydney has two Opus Dei youth centres, both on the North Shore. The male Dartbrooke Study Centre in Archer Street, Chatswood, is actually as well an official residence, housing when Alan Gill visited 2 priests and 10 numeraries. The centre has its own chapel. Sporting, craft and academic activities are available for boys, and of course there are plenty of spiritual events as well. Dartbrooke featured in *The Australian* in 1987, when John Lyons interviewed a young seminarian and his mother. The young man was sent to Dartbrooke one afternoon a week at 15 years of age to receive some academic coaching to prepare him for exams. His mother was unaware that he was soon persuaded to participate in examinations of conscience and other activities that had nothing to do with his school work. Soon he was being groomed to become a numerary, and encouraged to listen to the advice of older members, rather than to his parents. When he decided at 17 to sever contact with Opus Dei, he was accused of "running away." Members were convinced that some personal sin or inadequacy was behind his defection (*The Australian*, 28-29/11/1987:Supp.(1)8).

Lyons also told the story of a young woman who had chosen to stay with Opus Dei, in spite of a widening rift with her family over the decision. She refused to be interviewed, but her mother told the familiar story of a young person going off to study secular subjects, knowing nothing of Opus Dei, but soon becoming deeply involved in its spiritual activities. The young woman still has some contact with her family, but her primary loyalty is to Opus Dei. She will not tell her family where she works (*The Australian*, 28-29/11/1987:Supp.(1)8).

No doubt this young member was involved at some stage with the Eremeran Club, the women's equivalent to Dartbrooke. Eremeran has around 100 members aged between 10 and 18 years of age, more than twice the 40 or so who spend time at Dartbrooke. Various sporting activities are popular at Eremeran, and girls go on weekend camps. Both these youth centres are immaculately presented, bearing witness to Escriva's philosophy of "all glory to God" (*The Way*, 1989:780). In every enterprise and activity, only the best will do.

Alan Gill found that some parents with children currently at Dartbrooke and Eremeran appreciated the traditional Catholic instruction given there, feeling that "good old-fashioned family values" were no longer sufficiently emphasised in Catholic schools and in the local churches. Gill also met with members of a protest group who believe they have lost their older children to Opus Dei (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/11/1992:25-26).

In spite of opposition and occasional newspaper "exposures," Opus Dei continues growing modestly in Australia, opening new buildings and planning new ventures to extend the work. Pared Ltd. operates 2 schools, Tangara at Cherrybrook for girls, and Redfield College for boys at Dural. There are also 2 kindergartens and infant schools for both boys and girls, one at Tangara, and the other, Retaval, at Wahroonga. All are publicised in a colourful, expensive brochure. As well as paying means-tested fees, parents are asked to "contribute" a capital loan to Pared of up to \$5000, which will be refunded at the end of the child's schooling.

The Pared establishments are described as independent schools which offer Catholic doctrine. In other words, they are, like Creston, Warrane and other enterprises, sponsored primarily by Opus Dei members and adherents, but are open to those of other faiths and none. Priests and numeraries are available for spiritual instruction. Tangara has a Catholic chapel, and there is a priest on the premises (*The Australian*, 28-29/11/1987: Supp.(1)8). These regular claims of private ownership and enterprise, repeated all round the world, are interesting. There can be few private establishments in the west today that have priests and laity from a highly trained religious organisation daily at their service.

Today the prelatore does declare its interest to some extent by inserting a statement to the effect that "the spiritual programme (or direction) offered through ... is entrusted to Opus Dei, a personal prelatore of the Catholic Church." I have American, Filipino and

other brochures and prospectuses which all include this declaration of interest.

The prelature's most impressive complex is no doubt the Kenthurst Study Centre, set in 25 acres of bush 12 kilometres west of Dural in Sydney's north-west. This beautifully appointed, recently built centre has accommodation for 60, seminar and tutorial rooms, and a library and chapel, as well as recreational facilities. It offers seminars, professional and cultural courses, and various spiritual activities, including the usual Opus Dei retreats and days of recollection. Donations were solicited during construction from people "who understand the urgent need for truly human values in our society" (*Kenthurst Study Centre* brochure). Many of the fittings were donated as well, as the principal pointed out to Alan Gill when he commented on their lavishness (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/11/1992:24-25). Opus Dei regularly solicits public donations when undertaking a project like Kenthurst – as, of course, do many community groups, churches and charities. Kenthurst was completed in 1990, and won a major design award.

No doubt the sexes are segregated at Kenthurst as they are in other Opus Dei facilities world-wide. When questioned about this practice "Doc" Joe Martins, Master of Warrane College, told Alan Gill that having separate facilities for men and women enabled students to concentrate better on work and "avoid all kinds of attachment, jealousies and showing off" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/11/1992:24). This is no doubt true, but does not explain the separation of the sexes, including married couples, at most Opus Dei events. Nor does such a sex-shy organisation seem to take adequately into consideration the very real possibility of homosexual attachments developing in these enclosed male or female environments. These "particular friendships," as they were once called in religious life, were strictly guarded against in seminaries, monasteries and convents. A senior diocesan priest told me that in his student days seminarians had to choose a different companion each day when they went out on their supervised walks (Conversation 9/9/1997). They were not permitted to become too closely involved with any one person.

The issue of having homosexually oriented men and women working in consecrated ministry is still a contentious one both in the Catholic Church and throughout Protestantism. While strongly espousing the traditional value of celibacy for those with a religious vocation, and fruitful, faithful marriage for others, Opus Dei has little to say on the issue of homosexuality. Occasionally women members who fall from grace, such as Maria del Carmen Tapia and Maria Angustias Moreno are accused of lesbian tendencies, but I have not come across any similar accusations levelled at men. They are seen as unbalanced or possibly interested in women (Walsh 1989:168-169).

Giving men and women "time out" from each other may seem harmless, even if a little eccentric to many today. Certainly there are many husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters, who would welcome a little respite. Critics point out however that the regular

splitting up of social groups or couples even for innocuous purposes such as spiritual instruction is one of the “divide and rule” practices common among many sects and cults. The leadership consolidates its power base through members’ obedience to its instructions (McGuire 1992:154), while members’ links with one another are weakened through lack of shared experience.

Withdrawing from “the world” to a purer, better way is another sign of sects and cults that is frequently publicised in the media. Home schooling is a means adopted by parents with a wide range of belief systems to ensure that their values and customs will remain the dominant influence on the growing child. Several Opus Dei – connected parents I met in Australia were interested in home schooling, partly to keep the children from unsuitable influences, but also because they were not satisfied with the standard of especially religious education in local Catholic schools. They were not alone in their concern at the “liberalisation” of Catholic education, which, they feel, puts more emphasis on freedom and individuality than on teaching “pure” doctrine and responsibility to God (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26/7/1994:page un-numbered).

An interest in home schooling often leads to the founding of independent schools. Members in the United States are involved in both areas. Interestingly, they were seen as the “centrists” at an independent Catholic schools conference in Steubenville, Ohio, in 1998 (*The Latin Mass*, Winter, 1999:9). An Opus Dei priest and a lay member who is an educational consultant both pointed out that some of the gathering’s enthusiasms for the *Baltimore Catechism* and the teaching of Latin in schools were rather dated (*National Catholic Reporter*, 11/9/1998:6). Members are not afraid to take on new concepts and ideas as long as they are not in conflict with the ethos of the prelatore.

Australian based members of Opus Dei are an interesting mix of nationality and personality. The first local priest to be ordained within the prelatore, for example, Fr. Romuald Josko, comes from Upper Silesia. He came to Australia with his parents as a boy of 8 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15/2/1983:7). Along with a few laconic “real Aussies” I met Americans, Spanish, Asians, and some exotic mixes from various parts of the world. New Zealanders, especially the young, frequently cross to Sydney for study and work. All were enthusiastic, happy and enjoying life in the prelatore. They had busy, highly structured lives, and a sense of purpose and destiny. Yes, the life was demanding, whether you were a parent at home with young children, the director of a centre, a university lecturer or a modest office worker. Yet what could be more important and satisfying than doing God’s work in the world?

I asked several members how they first came into contact with the prelatore. Interestingly none of them were sought out and recruited into the organisation. All had come upon Opus Dei first by chance, in Australia and far beyond, either by attending an advertised function,

or through word of mouth. Several had been seeking “something more” than the wider Church seemed to offer. They found a home in the Opus Dei “family,” and in some cases forgiveness and healing for lives spent far from God. All were grateful for the guidance and support they had received, and were coping well with a very different lifestyle in the present (Interviews 22-28/1/1996). Women members, I found, were more relaxed and able to discuss a variety of issues, perhaps because they were talking to another woman.

Family life is very important to members of Opus Dei. They often delight in having a considerable number of children, an unfashionable attitude in today’s middle class western world. Gatherings are held from time to time in private homes – for one sex at a time, naturally – where the priest or lay director may enjoy a little family hospitality. There will be an improving talk or discussion, and one of the Opus Dei videos may be shown. The founder is to be seen in the older videos, speaking to admiring audiences on his travels. He appears urbane and very much in control in these films, leading the audience along and enjoying a joke from time to time. Self-published literature is available at these get-togethers for any interested person to buy or sometimes borrow. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal on these occasions. Friends and those showing an interest in Opus Dei may be invited to attend.

To look at both sides of the picture, I attempted to find any ex-members or people who had associated with Opus Dei for some time but decided against joining. A Melbourne priest knew a mother who had protested strenuously when her daughter became involved with the prelature. The woman became in time so afraid of Opus Dei that she moved to another part of the country and changed her name. The priest was unable to trace her. He gave me the telephone number of a Sydney woman who was researching Catholic movements in Australia. She did not return my call. “Most people here don’t know anything about Opus Dei, and don’t want to, either,” said a diocesan priest abruptly (Interview 22/1/1996). I was often given the impression that Australians felt I was either wasting my time or taking a huge risk in researching such a topic. Some members of the clergy were either contemptuous or dismissive of Opus Dei, and became aggressive if I attempted to say anything positive about the prelature. There is obviously a considerable distance between the mainstream Church in Australia and Opus Dei – and both sides are no doubt happier that way.

There is no highly structured anti-Opus Dei organisation like the American ODAN, the Opus Dei Awareness Network, in Australia, but there is an “awareness” group that meets monthly in a Sydney park. The Concerned Group For Opus Dei includes a modest number of parents and other interested Catholics, including nuns. When Alan Gill and a photographer attended a meeting, one woman brought a wig, and dark glasses for her friends (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/11/1992:25).

Some parents wanted to speak out, but knew it would widen the breach between themselves and their Opus Dei-connected adult children. Others complained of the robot-like behaviour of their children who had joined the prelature. Initiates, they claimed, are pressured to part with valuables and to solicit donations. It all sounds very familiar – both to readers of books on sects and cults, and to those who remember life in the pre-Vatican II Church.

Though Catholics are, largely due to more recent immigration, now the most numerous Christian group in Australia, constituting 27% of the total population by 1996, Opus Dei remains a highly specialised minority interest. It is hard to be sure exactly how many members Opus Dei has in Australia. Some authorities claim the prelature gives artificially low figures so the public will not realise how widespread its influence has become. This is unlikely. Members are proud of their organisation's growth, and spend a great deal of time working to attract new members. Did not their founder say, "That burning desire to win fellow-apostles is a sure sign that you have really given yourself to God"? (*The Way*, 1989:810). I would say that Opus Dei might have around 400 members throughout Australia, including long-term members sent from overseas. There are around a dozen priests, mostly of foreign birth. Most centres will also have groups of co-operators and other interested adherents who attend some functions and take an interest in the work.

This may seem a small result for so much effort, but joining Opus Dei is a huge commitment. Contrary to popular belief, they do not take just anyone to swell their numbers. As we have already seen, a new prospect must be well-balanced mentally and emotionally, especially if they are considering the lonely life of a celibate vocation. Sometimes girls came begging to be accepted as numerary recruits, a woman director told me. But she could see they were better suited to become wives and mothers. Sometimes they might try the life for a year or two, but they soon realised their talents lay elsewhere. These girls were released with no hard feelings.

This is quite a different picture from the usual dramatic tales of teenagers brainwashed, cut off from their families and brought into membership almost against their will. No doubt there are over-zealous recruiters who do not want to let a prize prospect go, but it soon becomes obvious that whatever the recruiting techniques and however rigorous the life, most members are living within the confines of the prelature because this is their chosen vocation. They do not want to be anywhere else. It must be extremely upsetting both for parents who do not want to or cannot understand this, and for members who find themselves estranged from their relatives and former friends. Often it seems that the two sides cannot come together on neutral ground. Some parents I know maintain normal relations with their children, while not always sharing their enthusiasm for Opus Dei, but those who end up making newspaper headlines seem unable to accept that their children may be staying in

the organisation because they are content there.

As well as speaking to priests and lay Catholics about Opus Dei, I talked to various Catholic and Protestant university chaplains. They said Opus Dei was attempting to obtain its own Australian university, but was unlikely to succeed because of opposition within academic circles and the wider Church (Interviews 19-23/1/1996). Other chaplains, while respecting Opus Deists' positive qualities, often found their presence on the campus "unhelpful." They rarely took part in shared activities or chaplaincy get-togethers, I was told, and were not keen to be present at ecumenical services. They preferred to go their own way, using what others saw as dated methods of interacting with students and staff. Similar concerns were raised when James Martin interviewed American campus chaplains for his 1995 article on Opus Dei (Martin 25/2/1995:13-14). On a shared campus such as that at the University of New South Wales there would be both an Opus Dei and a general Catholic chaplaincy, offering separate activities for students.

The few Opus Dei organised talks and discussions I attended on campus were extremely well-prepared and presented, following the prelature's usual stance on all matters of faith and morality. To the speakers this was the only truth, the correct way of viewing the matter, and deviant opinions therefore must be held in error. It is not possible to win an argument with Opus Dei, because only they, through the Pope and Magisterium, have the fullness of truth. As one of the university chaplains I spoke with pointed out, members are rarely willing to pool experiences or learn from others (see also *The Tablet* 26/3/1983:288). Gordon Urquhart found this a characteristic of the newer Catholic movements, desiring to teach others but not willing to learn in exchange (Urquhart 1996:19).

No matter how hard outsiders try to understand Opus Dei's point of view, if a common vocabulary is not agreed on from the outset, meaningful discussion is impossible. Members for example constantly speak of the highly structured prelature as an "unorganised organisation" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26/7/1994: page un-numbered), and numeraries say Opus Dei has no control over their lives outside the spiritual aspect (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/2/1983:7), while in fact every activity must be accounted for to a superior or confessor. Everything depends on the words one chooses to use, and the exact meaning assigned to them on each occasion. Allan Leibman, general manager of the Ritz-Carlton hotel, shares Opus Dei's concern with precision – and innovation – in the use of language. "We are not servants," he told hospitality students during a Kenvale seminar. "We are service professionals" (*Kenvale Update*, December 1994; Issue 4:3). With a careful choice of language, it is possible to redefine our world, and our role in it.

Many Australians simply cannot be bothered having any kind of relationship with such a complex and controversial group. One chaplain told me he would not worry if Opus Dei eventually came to his campus and "picked off a few stragglers." He had a large attendance

at campus functions, and did not see the prelature as posing any kind of threat to his position. Other chaplains, however, react angrily to the notion of Opus Dei encroaching on their territory.

Some years ago the University of Tasmania chaplaincy in Hobart was given to an Opus Dei priest. The Jesuits had held the position for many years, but finally withdrew because of staffing difficulties (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/11/1992:23). A women's centre is also now established in Hobart. Thus Opus Dei, by being trained, willing and available, steps into the breach when others lose interest or fail. Slowly the prelature gains influence and new territory.

For many years all Opus Dei's attempts to establish itself in the Melbourne diocese were in vain. The Bishop and Council of Priests could see no reason to permit yet another religious group to settle in the area. Priests and numeraries would visit Melbourne to conduct recollections and retreats, as they did also in other centres such as Canberra, Brisbane and Perth, but they had no official standing and could not open centres in Melbourne. Recently, however, the traditionally minded present Bishop of Melbourne, George Pell, decided to invite Opus Dei to establish itself in his diocese. I wrote to Bishop Pell enquiring into the reason for his decision, and asking if he was satisfied with the way things had worked out so far. I was interested to know as well if Opus Dei had blended successfully into the diocese, and added in some way to Melbourne's spiritual life. To date Bishop Pell has not responded. According to the Catholic Information Office in Melbourne, there is rarely any mention of Opus Dei in the local press. The prelature does, however, offer retreats for priests through advertising in the Vicar General's newsletter. Any enquiries that come into the office about Opus Dei are referred to the prelature's own priest at Freeman Street, Hawthorn (Letter 20/2/2001).

Opus Dei arrived in Australia at a time of great turmoil and change in the Catholic Church, as well as in the wider community. The old enclosed "Catholics only" mentality was replaced by an open-ness to new ideas and outside influences that horrified many. Thousands of priests and religious left their consecrated lives to seek fulfilment in "the world." The laity became better educated and more aware, less willing to offer automatic obedience and respect to any man in a clerical collar. The founder of Opus Dei, however, to the end of his days did his best to keep the old ways and standards alive. His Australian contingent became involved on arrival in Catholic education, working with young people, offering spiritual activities to local priests, and attracting supporters who could help them get centres established. Though still small in number and often at odds with the wider Australian Church, Opus Dei is making its mark in a modest way, especially in the Sydney area. Sydney is the gathering place for members and supporters in this part of the world.

Chapter 6

THE PRELATURE REACHES NEW ZEALAND

By the time Opus Dei was ready to “move over” from Sydney to New Zealand at the end of the 1980’s, a whole generation of young adults had been born since Vatican II, growing up in the modern Church. They knew only the Mass in the vernacular, a much more relaxed attitude to moral and spiritual issues, and a world in which many of the old Protestant-Catholic and secular-religious dichotomies had lost much of their force (Collins 1986:6-7).

The wider world faced a greater range of moral issues than ever before. Progressive and increasingly secular societies jostled for political, economic and technological supremacy, leaving many victims in their wake.

New Zealand considered asking the International Court of Justice to rule on the legality of nuclear weapons – however, it was feared such a move might be too costly. As Indira Gandhi’s assassins were sentenced to hang, Pakistan’s Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as the first elected woman leader in the Islamic world. Many Moslems saw little point in having a woman in a “man’s job.” A Liverpool man was cleared of murdering his son who became “a monster” while on drugs. An 88 year old American confined to an overcrowded Florida rest home went berserk, killing 2 fellow residents and injuring 4 more. Singer Cliff Richard, criticised 30 years previously for being “too suggestive” with his rock ‘n roll music, was now decried for being “too holy” and a Christian. The British Catholic Church appealed to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to introduce laws limiting research carried out on human embryos.

The Church had a variety of serious concerns to face.

Many of the issues raised by the Vatican II findings remained unresolved in 1989. Some Catholics were deeply disappointed at the degree of change and reform that had taken place, feeling they had not gone nearly far enough. Others took the opposite view, wanting the “madness,” as Escriva described it, to stop (Estruch 1995:202). The updating of a venerable institution, in their opinion, was weakening and destroying the Church from within (Isichei 1996:84).

A significant local example of the divergence of Catholic opinion appeared on the cover page of the *New Zealand Tablet* of 4th January 1989. A woman’s group, Magnificat, had been formed as a protest against what members saw as the “masculinisation of women by contemporary ‘feminist’ groups.” They felt feminism subverted natural distinctions between the sexes, “debasing and devaluing womanhood and family life.” The formation of

the group was spurred by a liberal women's network, Sophia, and the Commission for Justice, Peace and Development (JPD) having obtained approval for a \$30,000 research project on sexism in the Church.

John Paul II, at a meeting of moral theologians and others in Rome for a forum on "Humanae Vitae: Twenty Years Later," stood by Paul VI's statements on birth control. Paul's words came from God, the Pope said, and disputing this teaching was the "equivalent of refusing to God Himself the obedience of our intelligence," and could threaten "the very cornerstones of Christian doctrine." All contraception was inherently immoral, and there should be no exceptions for any reason. The Roman forum was sponsored by the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family – and Opus Dei's Academic Centre of the Holy Cross (*NZ Tablet*, 18/1/1989:3).

Two Sydney priests were concerned at the influence fundamentalist groups, both inside and outside the Church, were having on young people. The fundamentalists were attracting the young with black and white simplistic answers to complex issues. The Church was not, the priests felt, dealing adequately with the problem (*NZ Tablet*, 25/1/1989:3). Fundamentalist Protestant sects in South America were at this time carrying off many Catholics, because, the Pope believed, of the shortage of priests. There was on average one priest in South America to 10,000 people (*NZ Tablet*, 22/3/1989:7).

American Dominican priest Matthew Fox would agree wholeheartedly with this suspicion of fundamentalism. After a 4 year examination of Fr. Fox's books and his teaching on creation spirituality and mysticism, the Dominican Master General requested that he take a sabbatical year to reflect on his position. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had initiated the examination of Fox's work after many orthodox Catholics complained of his activities. Fox responded by taking out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times*, blaming "fundamentalist zeal" in the Church for his fate (*NZ Tablet*, 25/1/1989:3). He was later to leave the priesthood and the Church, and become an Anglican.

Authentic lay participation in the post Vatican II Church was a myth, said an indignant Chris Finlayson, listing various occurrences in which lay opinion was over-ruled or ignored by the clergy (*NZ Tablet*, 15/2/1989:5-6). Ian Thompson, a former chairman of the National Commission for the Laity, published a reply. It was a pity, he said, that Finlayson had chosen to air such selective, negative criticism (*NZ Tablet*, 22/3/1989:6). All Catholics, said Thompson, had "stubbed a toe or two" in their pilgrimage with the Church since Vatican II, but the pilgrimage itself was the important thing, not the odd hiccup along the way.

The Redemptorist order, faced with an ageing religious community and a steep decline in vocations, decided to sell Wellington landmark St. Gerard's Monastery (*NZ Tablet*, 3/5/1989:10). The order had discussions with a number of interested parties. The monas-

tery was eventually sold to the European-based International Catholic Programme of Evangelisation, to be used as a base and training centre for young lay missionaries.

The *New Zealand Tablet's* "Answerman" made his last appearance on April 12th, 1989. The last two questions he dealt with concerned when Catholics should obey Rome, and whether women and girls, as well as men, should have their feet washed on Holy Thursday. The questions sent in were becoming repetitive, readers were told, and most should probably in any case be answered by local parish clergy (*NZ Tablet*, 12/4/1989:10).

Hamilton Bishop Edward Gaines' decision to invite Opus Dei to his diocese to take over the tertiary chaplaincy was no doubt in part inspired by the fact that in one year 5 religious orders had withdrawn from the area (*Accent*, September 1988:14). The Passionist Fathers who had been acting as university chaplains for some years returned to Australia, to the dismay of many who had benefited from their various ministries.

Though I was told by locals that most Waikato Catholics disapproved of Bishop Gaines' decision, others welcomed what they saw as the arrival of a group of highly educated, committed, loyal Catholics who would be an asset and inspiration to the local community. "Bringing Opus Dei here, a wise historic decision," proclaimed the editorial heading in the *New Zealand Tablet* (8/6/1988:3). Editor John Kennedy actually hoped Opus Dei might eventually take over the tertiary chaplaincies throughout the country. His information on Opus Dei, obviously taken from one of their own publications, mentions practising an "intense spiritual life without abandoning their own social environment or occupation." He says they are not religious and do not take vows, or lead a community life. Many commentators would disagree.

Kennedy's support for Opus Dei no doubt stemmed from what he saw as their total loyalty to Pope and Magisterium. The New Zealand Church, he said, needed an "intellectual uplift." Youth nurtured on a "watered-down, winsome kind of Catholicism," would suddenly find themselves challenged and revitalised. He quotes some statistics: Opus Dei members are active in 479 universities worldwide. They are involved with 604 newspapers, journals and other publications, 52 radio and television corporations, 38 news and publicity agencies, and 12 film production and distribution companies.

New Zealand Tablet's Catholic commentator "Veritas" was also approving. "Opus Dei comes at the right time" was his headline (*NZ Tablet*, 22/6/1988:16). He was cautious however about predicting how such a Eurocentric organisation would fit into New Zealand's South Pacific life and culture. Even some Irish priests over the years, he said, had never understood the "Kiwi" Catholic. Opus Dei must realise that New Zealand was today a multi-cultural country, and adapt itself accordingly.

A young diocesan priest who had read about Opus Dei wrote to Bishop Gaines on 16 June 1988, expressing his concern at having them operating in a New Zealand diocese and controlling a tertiary chaplaincy. In his response Gaines said that while the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes resented the personal prelature and the fact that Opus Dei was under the authority of the Congregation of Bishops, they had no grounds for complaint.

He had examined Opus Dei's operations in Italy, Singapore, Australia and the United States, and noted that the Pope had recently personally ordained 27 or 28 of their priests. Gaines liked their reputation for forming and training lay people, especially the poor, and in educating the future intellectual leaders of the community. He had questioned Opus Dei's "rigidity, conservatism and secretiveness," and found them "very open and pledged to implement Vatican II which every Bishop is obliged to do in his Diocese." "If I find them too conservative," he promised, "I will be the first to let them know." (Letter from Bishop Edward Gaines, 28/6/1988).

In fact, it seems that Gaines may soon have regretted his decision. Shortly after the Bishop's death a few years later, one of his relatives told me he felt from what he had heard that Gaines had miscalculated, finding Opus Dei not as malleable and open to his agendas as he had hoped. Ironically, shortly before Opus Dei arrived in New Zealand, Gaines was criticised by a *New Zealand Tablet* correspondent for labelling the CUF organisation "ultra conservative" (*NZ Tablet*, 24/2/1988:5).

Fr. Max Polak, an American who had been chaplain at Warrane College for 11 years, arrived in Hamilton in September 1988. Passionist Fr. Gerald Quinn, the departing university chaplain, introduced him to his new territory. Fr. Polak, interviewed by *Zealandia* in October, said he had received a "tremendous" welcome, being accepted wherever he went (*Zealandia*, 23/10/1988:3). He stressed that Opus Dei remained basically a lay organisation, though some members were priests. He had not come to give it a higher profile. Retreats and other activities had already taken place in Auckland and Wellington over the last 2 years, he said, since a Wellington man got in touch with Opus Dei after reading an article about the prelature. Fr. Polak felt that much hostility was caused by "lack of personal contact with members" – in other words, people were demonising the unknown, relying on hearsay rather than checking the facts. Many people, I found, simply do not want to know anything about Opus Dei. Little has changed in a decade.

In early 1989 Fr. Polak settled officially in Hamilton, along with Spanish Fr. Frank Garcia and several laymen. They moved into an old house near Waikato University which had, in the usual Opus Dei way, been purchased by a group of supporters and renovated. Several lay women followed the men, establishing themselves in another renovated old

house some distance away. Supporters shared humorous anecdotes of the cobwebs and spiders in the women's outbuildings, and the exploits of the men, who, alone in a strange country and not that keen to cook, swiftly ate their way through a year's supply of bottled fruit that had been given to them.

The men's residence in Old Farm Road became the Greywood study centre, while the women's house in Hillcrest Road was named Rimbrook. Both centres soon began offering various courses for young people, and spiritual activities for the local Catholic community.

Frs. Polak and Garcia stayed for 5 or 6 years in Hamilton, eventually moving on to other posts overseas. They were replaced by Frs. Ed Barry from the United States and Spanish Joseph Pich, who have also now gone on to other endeavours. The latest priests in New Zealand are a young Spaniard and one of the first Australians ordained into Opus Dei.

Most numeraries in New Zealand are still foreign "imports." It is hoped that eventually there will be New Zealand Opus Dei priests, but that day has not yet arrived. There is still only a tiny number of Australian priests after nearly 40 years' official presence in the country. Opus Dei's public profile and what we could perhaps call "shock value" – the sharp reaction of local Catholics to any mention of the prelature – is out of all proportion to its marginal position in the New Zealand Church.

Though from the beginning members travelled about the country meeting with interested people, they were not permitted to open centres outside the Hamilton diocese. They were especially keen to branch out into Auckland and Wellington, where they had small groups of supporters. Permission was not forthcoming from the local bishops, however.

In the mid-1990's a group of concerned Auckland religious and lay people gathered what information they could to weigh the pros and cons of allowing Opus Dei to establish itself in the diocese. They were particularly concerned at the long-term consequences of allowing a foreign organisation with limited local accountability and aggressive proselytising techniques develop a second base in New Zealand. In the end Bishop Pat Dunn felt it was unfair to exclude Opus Dei when other Catholic groups were receiving permission to live and work in his diocese. The growing shortage of priests no doubt helped him to make up his mind. He would not be the first bishop to succumb to the temptation of acquiring an extra well-trained, highly disciplined priest or two. In a *New Zealand Herald* interview he pointed out that smaller families and a more individualistic, prosperous society had led to a serious reduction in vocations. Parents wanted grandchildren, and young men were reluctant to give up the attractions and rewards of the secular life for a solitary celibate existence as a parish priest. Bishop Dunn felt it was time that parishes became involved in seeking recruits for seminary training, pointing out that centuries ago it was often the community who selected leaders later revered as saints. Waiting for suitable men to come forward was

no longer enough. In the early 1980's the average age of an Auckland priest was 48. By the late 1990's it was an alarming 62. Perhaps Bishop Dunn hoped a few of Opus Dei's thorough recruitment drives would help alleviate the problem (*New Zealand Herald*, 25/11/1997:Sect. A:11).

Members chose an old wooden villa near one of the city's Marist centres to house the first male residents in Auckland. The women eventually acquired a sizeable property in Remuera. Co-incidentally, this house outwardly resembles the first women's centre in Spain, opened in 1942 (*Blessed Josemaria Escriva*, 1992:30). No doubt as in the Hamilton area, these residences were soon renewed inside and out, decorated as attractively but economically as possible, using voluntary labour and such techniques as framing attractive calendar pictures and recovering donated pieces of furniture.

The Auckland university chaplaincy is in Dominican hands, so Opus Dei priests have to be content with other pastoral activities. Their interest in students and academic life naturally persists in Auckland as elsewhere. An important part of getting established in a new area is making friends, attending diocesan functions to see and be seen, and knocking on presbytery doors to seek other priests who might care to take an interest in the prelature. This was done in Hamilton, during early visits to Wellington, and no doubt in other places as well. The calls, like those of the Australian Neocatechumenate years later, were often not appreciated (Interview 3/9/1997).

One of the activities soon to get under way in Hamilton was a monthly day of recollection for priests. Working with priests, we will recall, was always a favourite activity of Escriva's. I was told that about a third of the diocese's 45 or so priests would attend the recollection every month. About another third would come occasionally, while the remainder never participated.

Recollections and retreats are an important part of Opus Dei's outreach. They are conducted in a formal, traditional manner. There is no dialogue possible during recollection sessions, and little at retreats and other spiritual occasions. The priest – or the lay speaker – shares the word of God and the ethos of the founder with the recipients, and that is that. Very occasionally questions or comments might be invited, but any problems or unresolved issues are usually discussed in private later with the priest or a senior numerary. The speaker has the authority and the knowledge: the audience are the seekers. Even if some discussion takes place in a more informal setting, Opus Dei remains the ultimate authority, translating the mind and will of God – in accordance with the teaching of the Magisterium, of course.

I was surprised at the difference between an Opus Dei and a diocesan day or evening of recollection. The diocesan event, for a start, even if it was advertised for women, might have a man or two present. It was a relaxed sharing, moving from room to room, with

everyone having a chance to speak and pray aloud if they wished. A facilitator, perhaps a nun or qualified lay person, directed proceedings, but the sessions were very much a group event. Questions were asked, grievances aired, and lively discussions often arose. There might be a theme for the day, or various topics would be covered. A priest was present at least part of the time, to give a spiritual talk and lead the group in prayer. People brought their lunch, eating outside when the weather was fine. A small charge was made for hot drinks and the use of the rooms.

Opus Dei recollections I have experienced are held in the evening, led by a priest, and conducted in a church or oratory. Confessions are heard before, in the middle of, and after the talks. This is at least partly a matter of convenience – the priest is a busy man, and a number of members and supporters may live a considerable distance away. Confessions are heard at other times as well.

The priest, the only man at these evenings for women, enters wearing a soutane and kneels at the altar to say a special prayer of the founder's. He then sits at a small covered table placed near the altar, to its left. He reads from notes by the light of a lamp. He may deal with a moral issue, an aspect of spiritual life, current events, or perhaps some special Church anniversary. The talk will be a blend of the priest's own opinions and experience, Church teaching, and advice for the listeners. The priest's views will always coincide with those of the Magisterium. He will quote various Church documents and authorities to back up his statements. The early Church Fathers and Thomas Aquinas are often called on. Escriva's words and example are mentioned at times, but not over-frequently.

After the first talk the priest retreats to the confessional. While he hears individual confessions, the remaining women seated in the church will take part in an examination of conscience, which is read aloud. They are expected to each silently examine their own conscience as searching questions are asked. An example each of a very traditional and more modern preparation for confession, or examination of conscience as they are sometimes called, are given in Appendices M and N. An Opus Dei examination of conscience would come between the two extremes.

Someone may then read aloud from an improving book until the priest is ready to resume. He gives a second talk on another topic, and then prepares for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Candles are lit on the altar, consecrated hosts placed in the monstrance, and the priest, wearing a special garment called a humeral veil, lifts the monstrance and blesses the people. Traditional hymns are sung, and the women disperse after a final blessing. Those who have not yet been to reconciliation now have their opportunity. It must be very late before the priest gets to bed some nights. Similar recollections for men are held separately, on different dates.

At both Opus Dei and other retreats the formal rite of reconciliation is offered, as well as the opportunity to have a private chat with the priest. Normally people would be left to make their own way to the priest when they chose, and no pressure at all applied to participate if they did not wish to see him. At Opus Dei retreats a list may be ticked off as each retreatant does his or her duty and reports in to Father. All attending the retreat, not just prelature members, are encouraged to participate. It is important that each person be “purified” regularly, admitting their failings and receiving a spiritual “tune-up,” being assured of divine forgiveness. They receive both a suitable penance and advice on how to hopefully cope better with their particular issues in future.

Everything is done as properly as possible within Opus Dei. The Hamilton centre has a portable confessional, a large folding screen designed by a priest who was formerly an architect. The priest travelling to other towns for retreats actually takes the screen with him, folded up into a suitcase-like shape with a convenient handle. This carefully designed artifact, complete with “window” of mosquito netting and purple silk, reminded me of Bishop Pompallier’s colourful travelling altar. This could also be folded up to look like a suitcase (King 1997:46).

Reconciliation is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Though regular confession is still one of the non-negotiable obligations placed on all members, many rarely if ever avail themselves of the sacrament today (Collins 1992:166). Some no longer feel the need to have a human intermediary between themselves and God, while others simply do not wish to discuss their personal issues and problems.

As we have seen earlier, confession was a major issue for Escriva, and it is constantly emphasised within Opus Dei. While there is no doubt a genuine concern that members maintain an open healthy relationship with God and his servants the Catholic clergy, it cannot be denied that knowing a person’s innermost secrets, thoughts and actions also gives the priest a powerful means of control. The penitent is stripped naked, defenceless, without the smallest measure of privacy left. Former members of Opus Dei complain of the confessional being used as a means of monitoring and pressuring both recruits and adult members (*ODAN Newsletter* Vol. 5;1995:1-2).

On the other hand, I have met plenty of mature, well-adjusted Catholics of a variety of theological stances who regularly avail themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation. They speak of feeling much better for the experience, renewed, encouraged, ready to move on in confidence to an even deeper relationship with God.

The retreat will be held in the local women’s or men’s centre if there is one. Otherwise a motel or small conference complex will be hired, making the retreat quite an expensive occasion. Those on modest incomes may be subsidised, or allowed to “pay off” the fee

in instalments. Non members and even non Catholics may be invited to attend. Non Catholics may not of course partake of the elements at the daily Mass.

If the retreat was for men, the priest would stay on the premises to eat and socialise with the retreatants. A weekend for women is different. If the venue is an Opus Dei women's centre, the priest will attend for the spiritual sessions and Mass, leaving immediately after. He will eat elsewhere, at home if it is close enough. When a public venue is used, a room will be set aside for the priest to use between sessions. Food will be taken to him, and he will eat alone. As soon as the day's events are over, he will leave the complex. He must sleep at another motel or residence. If he is lucky a nearby priest or male Catholic may invite him to stay. This extreme caution is intended both to resist temptation and avoid giving rise to scandal – a great fear of Escriva's that is still a major concern of members today (Schweninger, Malinoski, DiNicola, 17/6/1995:2).

An ordinary diocesan or other retreat would usually take place in a retreat house designed for the purpose, or in a former convent or boarding school. This keeps costs down, and helps the dwindling number of nuns and brothers who still run such establishments. The retreats are often mixed, with both men and women attending. Even if he is the only man present, the priest will normally stay on the premises for the duration, sharing all facilities and eating with the retreatants. The whole idea behind a "retreat" is that people are away from "the world," having literally "retreated" to a quiet place to focus without distractions on their relationship with God.

The priest interestingly plays a smaller part in the Opus Dei retreats. He does not give all the talks. Senior numeraries help out here. When the priest delivers the talk it becomes a "meditation" and takes place, with prayers, in the oratory or chapel. (A room is converted into a temporary chapel if the retreat is taking place in a secular complex). If a numerary is speaking, the session is labelled a "talk," and it takes place in another room. The content would be much the same whether priest or lay person was speaking – topics include the love of God, caring for others, improving one's spiritual life, and of course the value of hard work! The priestly discussion might be a little more intellectual, with a number of learned references.

No matter who gives the talks, they are well-prepared, relaxed and good-humoured, designed to encourage and build up the listeners. Many critics of Opus Dei would be surprised to see a black-suited priest cracking jokes, sometimes at his own expense, during a solemn gathering, and reminding the audience that God is pure love, not some watchful policeman in the sky. No doubt some members relate better than others to this latest image of the divine, but the fact is that the prelature is as up to date as many other Church organisations in its understanding of the world. I found Opus Dei priests through the 1990's well

informed about the latest trends in theology, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. They simply refused to engage with concepts that clashed with the prelature's stand on moral and spiritual issues.

This attitude unfortunately limits the effectiveness especially of their ministry on campus. Opus Dei chaplains do try to relate to youth in a friendly, non-threatening way, but as they operate from a hierarchical prelature and hierarchical model of Church, they simply do not strike a chord with many students.

For a start, their black clerical suits – and soutanes as well in Australia – set them apart from everyone else on campus. Even most Australasian professors at the dawn of the third millennium wear casual clothes on campus, and are available to the most junior of students. All are seen as partners to some degree in a common scholarly enterprise.

Many priests avoid clerical dress outside of official functions and Mass because they do not want to appear separate and different, cutting themselves off from the people. The Pope has said priests must wear proper clerical dress, respond the Opus Dei clergy, and they are in fact a people apart. They are ordained priests, not members of the laity. This is true, but the fact remains that it is the casually dressed, relaxed chaplain who treats students as friends and fellow sojourners who attracts the numbers. They feel free to be themselves and frankly discuss the issues that concern them. There are also, of course, many young people with a Christian background who want nothing to do with any chaplaincy during their university years (Interview 24/2/2000). No amount of persuasion will entice them into spiritual activity.

In 1998 I met a young woman who in her university days had clashed with an Opus Dei chaplain when she wanted to play her guitar at Mass. She was accustomed to this kind of informality in her parish church, and was deeply offended at not being permitted the same degree of freedom on campus. The priest in turn was offended at her persistence, and her refusal to respect his decision as the final word on the matter. These two people, both devout Catholics but a generation apart and with opposing world views, simply kept talking past each other. The situation is typical of the confusion and dissension that has followed the "opening of the windows" at Vatican II. No real victor emerges from such a dispute: both debaters are diminished by the lack of charity and understanding.

On a large campus with more than one Catholic chaplain students will simply attend the activities that best suit their needs. When there is a sole chaplaincy, however, and it does not fully engage with students' questions and aspirations, they will simply drift away. Some may give up practising their faith in these circumstances, while others get involved with lively Protestant groups on campus who seem to have the direction and answers the young people are seeking.

With the old confident Catholic world view gone, the Church's plausibility structure is now seriously undermined by both a lack of inner cohesion and competing world views. Because pluralistic societies lack the comfort and certainty of a single comprehensive world view supported by most of its members (McGuire 1992:37-38), many groups' competing claims may seem equally valid and attractive to the seeker. It is not surprising that many young people become confused about the direction they should take. This is where they need the guidance of a chaplain who is confidently comfortable with his or her own beliefs, and is open as well to a sympathetic hearing of the understandings and aspirations of others. Chaplains today have to operate more out of goodwill than authority. In the west, at least, the authoritarian Catholic chaplain whose word is law is fast becoming a figure of history.

Acceptance of the authenticity of Opus Dei's style of authoritarian Catholicism is dwindling. In fact, the power and authority of the Church Universal diminished quite rapidly after Vatican II. Paul Collins believes that Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* forced many Catholics from uncritical acceptance of Papal authority to making their own independent decisions on many moral and spiritual issues. Sadly it is often forgotten now that Paul was also the Pope of the *Populorum Progressio* encyclical (1967) that called for vast social reform. Here Paul urged rich advanced countries to accept their moral responsibility to less fortunate nations, so that eventually every person could "live a fully human life, free from servitude..." (Collins 1986:114).

It is rather Paul's hesitation and moral conservatism that is remembered today through *Humanae Vitae*. When the contraceptive pill was first developed and marketed in the early 1960's, some Catholic authorities felt it was permissible for the faithful to use this new means to limit or space their families (Collins 1986:115). As Collins points out, obedience to the Church's authority and moral code was an important condition of membership. If Father said a practice was morally acceptable, it must be so. Many Catholics, especially in western countries, thus began using artificial contraception.

Paul admitted in an interview published by Milan's *Corriera della Sera* that he was completely confused by the problem (Collins 1986:115). A commission met, and the majority wanted to permit use of the pill. Paul, it seems, agreed personally with this view. However, a persistent minority were opposed to any change in Church law on the matter. The Pope's frank interview had already horrified conservatives. The Curia advised him that he would weaken papal teaching authority if he did not uphold the traditional condemnation on all artificial contraception.

So *Humanae Vitae* appeared on 24 July 1968, to the dismay of many Catholics who were already using the pill. This was not an infallible document, but left couples little room

for manoeuvre. As Collins says, many were brought to moral maturity in one step over this issue (Collins 1986:118). They had to make their own informed choices, and live with the consequences. Many left the Church. Others used contraception and partook of the sacraments regardless. The laity's attitude to Papal authority had changed forever. Paul's bowing to the wishes of the Curia had led to the very result they feared. There was no turning back for either the Vatican or the people. A better educated and informed laity began making more of their own moral decisions without consulting their spiritual leaders (Tolerton 1994:48-49;66-67).

The confusion and debate still linger as an undercurrent in today's Church life, in Australasia as elsewhere. The issues of divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, abortion, sexual relations outside of marriage and artificial reproductive technology all occupy as well the attention of laity and clergy alike. Many feel these "personal" and mostly sexual questions are diverting far too much time and attention from urgent matters in the field of social justice, when millions are starving and suffering all kinds of misery and persecution (Isichei 1996:83).

Opus Dei runs various operations in Europe, America and elsewhere for the benefit of the poor (Olaizola 1992:77;188;212), and sponsors work projects, taking young people from this part of the world – at their own expense – to help others during their summer holidays. Articles such as those appearing in the *NZ Tablet* (6/3/1994) and the *Waikato Times* (3/9/1994) may be placed in the media to invite or encourage participation. However, the prelature's chief area of concern remains in the traditional "spiritual" approach to life. Faith and morality – and hard work – are what matters. The poor are commended if they are satisfied with their lot, or at least are prepared to persevere with their humble lives as best they can (Olaizola 1992:96-102; West 1987:111-112;96-97). They set a useful example to their betters, and to young Opus Deists engaging in a little social outreach. Life on earth is after all but for a moment: "All that this earth can offer us is continually passing away," said Escriva, "hardly has pleasure begun than it is already ended" (*The Way*, 1989:753). Suffering is good for the soul: "No ideal becomes a reality without sacrifice. Deny yourself. It's so beautiful to be a victim!" (*The Way*, 1989:175).

It is not surprising that many young people are not attracted by gloomy messages such as these. The literature on offer, written by members and published by Opus Dei firms, is wordy and serious. Booklets available to students carry titles such as *Vocation, Marriage And The Priesthood*, and *Commentaries On The Holy Mass*. One fascinating title still in use in the mid 1990's was *Is Purity Possible?* by Jose Luis Soria, a priest who was also apparently the doctor summoned when Escriva died. Sacrifice, abstention and self-denial are frequently recommended, and the founder is quoted: "Decorum and modesty are younger brothers of purity," and "Gluttony is the forerunner of impurity" (Soria 1975:32). There is

nothing wrong with the message of the booklet, that Christian chastity is possible and valuable, but Soria wraps his message in such cautious verbiage that it is in danger of being lost in the undergrowth. An updated version, written by layman Darryl Glick, is a little more straightforward, but still dwells on mortification, delicacy and prudence, warning of the dangers of “skating on the edge” and seeking “nibbles” of forbidden fruit (Glick 1985:18-19). There is little attempt to address the much more sophisticated sexual concerns facing the young in the 21st century.

These booklets are far removed from Catholic literature at the liberal end of the scale, such as New Zealand priest Felix Donnelly’s *Flames And Ether* (1984), where the author describes all kinds of human sexual activity, with representative case histories. Here again we see a huge divergence of opinion amongst Catholics. In Donnelly’s view most consensual sexual behaviour, including homosexuality, is normal and natural, and should not be regarded as either sinful or immoral. The Church, obviously, does not share his opinions. He was publicly reprimanded by his bishop and had his priestly faculties withdrawn. The official Church position still regards legitimate sexual expression as permissible only within the boundaries of heterosexual marriage. Opus Dei fully endorses this stand.

Not surprisingly, Opus Dei’s impact on New Zealand Catholicism has been a modest one. They have attracted a following of perhaps 100 to 150 out of a Catholic population of half a million. By the mid 1990’s they had only two local celibate male vocations. A number of Asians, especially Filipinos, have taken an interest, and there is a tiny Maori and Pacific Island membership. Many conservative Catholics, while appreciating Opus Dei’s traditional stance and support of the Pope, are suspicious of its “exotic” origins and different modes of spiritual expression. “I like a good rosary or a novena,” one elderly woman told me, “not all this talking and confessing.” She had attended one recollection, and would not return.

On the other hand, Catholics without any commitment to Opus Dei may call in occasionally during recollections, either to take advantage of the facilities for reconciliation, or to hear a spiritual “pep talk.” A layman with a passionate interest in social justice attended a recollection out of curiosity. The first talk already infuriated him. The priest announced that the poor needed to be taught how to prepare cheap, more nutritious meals, he said, and to get out and take more exercise. I knew the priest in question, a caring man who came himself from a modest background, and suspect my friend’s indignation led to his hearing the message imperfectly. This shows how easily legends and false impressions may be formed.

Other more traditional organisations were puzzled at first by Opus Dei’s refusal to dialogue with them or engage in any shared activities. I was told this was because of the complexities of “Church politics” (Interview 19/4/1997). It is also about exclusivity. Opus

Dei is one of a kind, part of the structure of the Church itself, it claims, and of course cannot share this unique ground with anyone else. Hence it must stand alone. During its years as a secular institute, delegates would be sent to conferences to deliberate with members of other institutes, but once Opus Dei upgraded to prelature status this sharing ceased. Even if the Pope is to be present, invitations to attend seminars for the new movements are also declined. "We explain that we are not a movement," a member told me seriously (Interview 1/5/1997).

It will be interesting to see what happens when other groups are also elevated to the status of personal prelatures. Will Opus Dei perhaps attempt to find another "unique" legal position for itself, one that better defines and includes the roles of members at all levels? Few non Opus Dei canon lawyers would agree that the present statutes really fully encompass Opus Dei's rather unusual set-up.

It has been common in the past for religious orders with lay associates to have a separate secular or "third" order for these members. Diocesan priests could also join such secular orders to follow that particular founder's charism. Opus Dei is not the only Catholic organisation today to combine celibate and lay members in a large, rather unwieldy group. Others such as the Focolare and Neocatechumenate do the same, though they do not seem to have a separate branch for their own priests, as Opus Dei has.

So far no other Church group has successfully applied to become a personal prelature. This was one of the options considered by Maori Catholics when a Maori bishop was requested. The Apostolic See appointed a Marist priest, Max Takuiria Mariu, Auxiliary Bishop of the Hamilton Diocese, with the authority of a Vicar for Maori Catholics throughout New Zealand. This is the first step in granting more autonomy to Maori. The Apostolic See may later approve the establishment of a Maori Bishopric such as the Anglicans developed some years ago - or may even authorise the setting up of a Maori personal prelature (Letter from Cardinal Thomas Williams, 8/7/1999). This type of prelature is exactly what is provided for in current canon law.

In the meantime, Opus Dei enjoys its special status to the full, performing a delicate balancing act between the ever-present need for "discretion" and the desire to show a devout united face to the wider world. It was an interesting experience in 1998 to watch local members prepare for a flying visit from Javier Echevarria, the current Prelate and the first leader to visit New Zealand. Printed invitations were sent out to all kinds of people in the hope of filling the Princes ballroom hired at the Hyatt Regency hotel in downtown Auckland. We were urged to bring anyone at all along to make the occasion a success.

In true Catholic fashion when the time came over half the seats remained empty until a last-minute influx of people fairly well filled the room. Perhaps 300 people of all ages

were present. A friend who accompanied me pointed out a few well-known local conservatives. The prelate, a small greying man in his 60's, with a calm modest manner, was flanked by several male members of Opus Dei who sat behind him throughout his appearance. The Regional Vicar, Fr. John Masso, seemed very much in charge of proceedings, with the prelate deferring to him on several occasions.

The evening took the form of a question and answer session. Though one of the priests had already told me that the organisers would be very careful who got to use the microphone – the event was a family gathering, not a theological debate, I was surprised at just how pre-arranged everything was. The full list of questions was typed and in the Spanish translator's hands before the proceedings began. Committed members, supporters and recruits were rewarded with the opportunity to stand and address a question to the Prelate.

The questions involved the same kind of general issues brought to the founder at similar gatherings a generation previously. How could women better care for their husbands? How could fathers be encouraged to take a more active part in family life? How should Christians make good use of television and other means of communication? The answers were as bland and generalised as the questions. The sole opportunity for a little meaningful dialogue was ignored. An older businessman remarked that there was some confusion about Opus Dei's role in New Zealand, especially at diocesan level. Could Father clarify the situation? Echevarria ignored the question, instead urging members to share the spiritual treasures they had received with their friends.

The friend who accompanied me to the evening, a priest who is a member of a religious order, made a surprising comment afterwards. Apart from one or two phrases, he said, there was little in the Prelate's utterances to show he was Catholic – surely an unintentional display from the leader of an organisation that prides itself on being at the very heart of Catholicism. On reflection, it is true that without the priestly garments the gathering could have been composed of any sedate, middle of the road Christians. Unlikely though it seems, perhaps Opus Dei is mellowing just a little on occasion, become middle-aged and even slightly ecumenical in its approach to the world. New Zealand, as local Catholics often jokingly remind me, is a long way from Rome.

With the 25th anniversary of the founder's death approaching on 26th June 2000 local members, encouraged by their priest, decided to celebrate in style by holding the next Wellington annual memorial Mass in the Sacred Heart Cathedral rather than in the usual modest older church. They had of course no chance of even half filling the Cathedral, but the gesture is typical of the boldness, faith and hope that sustains members. What they project may just, with the help of the Holy Spirit and the founder's prayers, one day come to pass.

The small New Zealand membership appears cheerful, harmless and community minded, no more than a group of good citizens peacefully getting on with their lives. The controversies and scandals of Opus Dei seem remote from this part of the world. Should the organisation just be left alone to follow its own path? Does it matter if its apostles pick off a few Australasian campus stragglers? Surely in a democracy people should be free to follow whatever religious or philosophical course they choose, as long as they are not harming others. I discussed this issue with an experienced older university chaplain, who is also a member of a religious order.

He agreed that of course each person has the right to choose his or her own mode of religious expression. What concerned him was that people who attached themselves to a hierarchical rigid structure that emphasised law and obedience were not growing into fully responsible autonomous adults. Not only were they allowing others to dictate how they should think, act and believe, but they were abdicating responsibility for their own actions by allowing church authorities to make moral decisions for them. A moral choice that grows out of inner conviction has more value than a "should" imposed from outside. This principle held true whether the worshipper was attached to a strict Hindu sect, Jehovah's Witnesses, a Protestant fundamentalist church, or Opus Dei (Interview 14/3/1998).

The chaplain referred to James Fowler's well-known "stages of faith," developed after Fowler related Piaget's and Kohlberg's structural-development theories to Erikson's psychosocial framework, discovering that people seemed to go through structural stages of faith development. The six stages Fowler defined saw the subject grow from stage 1 where a child sees the world as a simple magical black and white experience of punishment and reward. This awareness develops into what Fowler calls the mythic-literal stage of faith, where the person takes on board the stories and beliefs of the community (Fowler 1981:149). Symbols are interpreted literally and one dimensionally. By stage 3 the developing personality has a less egocentric view of the world, and possesses an unexamined individual ideology. Many people never move beyond this stage of faith development to critically examine their beliefs, much less move on through stage 4's individuative – reflective faith of young adulthood, to mid-life stage 5's coming "to terms with its own unconscious," tapping into the spiritual mysteries of the universe (Fowler 1981:186). Fowler believes that only special fully aware individuals such as Gandhi and Mother Teresa have the maturity and insight to reach the sixth and final stage, to a universalising faith.

Here, he says, they have a sense of an ultimate environment that is inclusive of all being. They have grown into "incarnators and actualisers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community," at one with the whole natural and spiritual world. They are "contagious," says Fowler, in that they create liberation from the ideological, social and other constraints humans place upon themselves (Fowler, 1981:201). They are often sub-

versive of societal structures, and may be put to death by those they hope to liberate. Often they are better appreciated after death. They are not perfect, but have a vision, charisma and intensity of purpose beyond that of most men and women.

Josemaria Escriva's followers would no doubt place him at once in the category of a stage 6 sage and saint. It is not enough, however, says Fowler, to be both revered and feared. Radical commitment to justice and love is also required; a sense of inclusiveness and community, of "selfless passion for a transformed world, a world made over not in *their* images, but in accordance with an intentionality both divine and transcendent" (Fowler 1981:201). Does Escriva rank with Gandhi and Mother Teresa, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Nelson Mandela? His disciples tell us with sincerity and absolute certainty that he does.

Opus Dei has certainly brought a different style of religious fervour and commitment to New Zealand. Local Catholics were not sure what to make of the first members to arrive in their community. Some were hostile and rejecting, though they had usually never met a member and had little accurate information on the prelature. Those local people who deplored the "laxity" that had followed Vatican II welcomed the newcomers as loyal, capable Catholics who would help put things right. They were soon to find that Opus Dei had its own agenda, and worked alone. A few New Zealanders joined the prelature, though often traditionally minded Catholics found its Spanish differences "too much." Members take a special interest as always in university chaplaincies, but so far have only one under their control. Other chaplains here, as in Australia, find their approach "different" and not always helpful, especially in ecumenical situations. Opus Dei has official centres now in two of the six New Zealand dioceses. This seems to be enough for them to cope with for the moment. They are unlikely to attract any great rush of recruits. As in Australia, a "discreet," rather sentimental Spanish piety is foreign to Catholics of practical pioneer stock. The prelature may have more success in the immigrant community, where some cultures may be closer to its style. Even then, Australia and New Zealand seem likely to remain minor outposts of Opus Dei activity.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

Opus Dei, one of a number of Catholic movements founded as a vehicle for reform during the 20th century, is one of the most recent “missionary” arrivals in New Zealand and Australia, the southern-most part of the English-speaking world. The first members to settle in both countries found a “young” society not far from its practical pioneer roots, its values and institutions derived from its Protestant and secular British beginnings. In both cases the Catholic minority was mostly of Irish origins.

A sophisticated European organisation with Spanish origins, however “discreet” members tried to be, stood out in mid-century Australasia. A number of Catholics were not happy at this presence in local communities. Some had read of controversies and scandals involving the organisation overseas. Others welcomed the newcomers, hoping they would provide a boost to local Catholic life and practice. Those who had hoped for co-operation with their ventures, however, soon learned that Opus Dei considered itself unique, even before acquiring personal prelature status, and preferred to work alone. Gradually a few local Catholics in both countries became involved with the new Work.

Those who made enquiries about Opus Deists found they not only worked in universities and schools, but through lay members controlled many businesses, banks, publishing houses and so forth, especially in Europe. Members were at times accused of pursuing very young people to persuade them to join. Often these teenagers would not have a proper understanding of the commitment they were making, and would not have consulted their parents on the matter (Kamm 3/1/1984:85; Martin 25/2/1995:15; 26-27).

Opus Dei preferred to establish centres in attractive, up-market parts of town, and seek out wealthy influential families, as the Jesuits and others had done before them. Though the main aim of the Work was stated as the “sanctification” of ordinary people through their everyday work without changing their status or mode of life, the founder of Opus Dei originally preferred to work with male students and priests.

After many years as a secular institute, Opus Dei became the world’s first personal prelature in 1982. The founder had been seeking a special status for his organisation for many years, but died before this came about. Ten years later Josemaria Escriva was beatified in Rome by John Paul II, amidst both jubilation and anger. While some supported the beatification, others felt Escriva was not a suitable subject for canonisation. There were too many unanswered questions, they said, about both the founder and his organisation. It is a sign of Opus Dei’s increasing temporal influence that the Vatican brushed aside these objections and went ahead with the beatification, the first step of the canonisation process, in what many saw as unseemly haste (Farrell 17/4/1992: pages un-numbered).

Opus Dei got under way in the first instance because of a devout, determined man who had the gift of convincing others to see his point of view. Too few people possess this quality. Twenty years ago a gentle, intelligent Russian official shocked me by saying what his country needed was Stalin back in power – a strong, positive leader who knew where he was going. There are few charismatic leaders, good or bad, left on the world stage today, and few heroes either for the young to admire in a post-modernist miasma of drug abuse, violence, poverty and unemployment. We all need heroes (Wookey 1996:70-72). As Tina Beattie pointed out in her article on the adulation surrounding Princess Diana, people do not become more rational and civilised in the absence of religion. Rather, our modern culture has become “vacuous, disjointed and incoherent” (Beattie 1998:265).

This is, I feel, one of the main reasons why young people continue to join Opus Dei in spite of its negative publicity and demanding life style. They have a central hero, Escriva, many positive role models within the organisation to emulate, and a divinely ordained purpose, the sanctification of themselves and others. What could be more satisfying? It is also the uncertainty and confusion of conflicting secularised world views, I feel, that has led to “conservative backlash” within the Catholic Church. This is not so evident in this part of the world, but in many strongly Catholic areas young priests who are “to the right of Opus Dei” are now being ordained (*Intercom Santiaguino*, March 2000:5; *The Tablet*, 26/9/1998:1243). These men are rigidly traditional in their views, and soon clash with both the laity and with older priests who have developed a more relaxed viewpoint. This backward-looking reaction is spreading. I was told recently of the concern expressed in Australia at the ordination of several very conservative young priests.

These young people, I was told, often feel that too much that was valuable in the traditional Catholic way of life has already been lost, and that many of the Church’s current problems are caused by “too much choice” being permitted to priests and laity alike (Conversation 2/2/2000).

It may seem that a dis-satisfied minority would have little opportunity to impose its views on the wider community. Yet we must remember that a number of the more conservative Catholic groups such as Opus Dei already control universities, newspapers and publishing houses, television and radio stations, banks and businesses. They have considerable influence already within the Vatican. Members are also often prominent in the secular world. It would not be too difficult given the right circumstances for one of the newer movements, or a coalition of interests, to impose its brand of traditional Catholicism on whole communities or even possibly in time on certain countries as well. We can see this process under way in Peru at present, where Opus Dei, backed by the present Pope, has gradually become a force to be reckoned with. Recently the respected father of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutierrez, was pressured out of Peru into exile in France.

If a bishop belonging to one of the newer movements should capture the Papacy when John Paul II dies, and impose a strictly traditional Catholicism on the Church, this would, I believe, be the final disappointment for many moderate and liberal members. A generation which was young during the Vatican II Council has grown grey waiting for the ideals espoused at the time to be fully implemented. Instead they have experienced a Church which ex-Catholic author John Cornwell believes has now entered a period of "acute and unprecedented danger" (*Sunday Star Times*, 19/3/2000:A17), with John Paul II increasingly frail, ill and out of touch with the realities of life in the 21st century. Numerous observers believe that many of his statements are now prepared for him by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This was once the Congregation for the Inquisition, the medieval agency for enforcing a tightly controlled single world view on the Christian population of the day.

The Inquisition is perhaps the most extreme example of the dangers of a controlling autocratic power exercised in the name of Christ. Many Catholics today are wondering what happened to the promise of collegiality espoused at the Vatican II Council. Some believe the time has come for a third Vatican Council to convene and carry the promises of the second Council to their logical conclusion (*The Dominion*, 30/10/1999:19).

No matter how good the original intentions, an excess of power concentrated in few hands may lead to bullying behaviour, personality cults, and other unfortunate complications within an organisation. There are many documented cases of the dangers of hero worship carried to excess, from the deaths of young people crushed in pop concert crowds to the excess of Hitler and Stalin and the loss of life at Jonestown and Waco.

Religious leaders may use their charisma for personal rather than communal ends (Milne 1987:260-290). Even moral charismatic leaders may have their message perverted after death by followers seeking to increase their own power and influence. It can be difficult for disciples to imagine that the hero-leader is other than kindly and well-intentioned towards his flock. Has he not been blessed by God, or the will of the people?

Suicide cult leader Jim Jones's son described in a television interview how he realised from an early age that his father was acting in a way that made a mockery of the principles that he professed. Yet so strong was Jones's influence and his gift of "doublespeak," turning perceived meanings on their head, that the son could not summon the will to confront him. "Suicide is not a defeat. It is a revolutionary act," was surely Jones's final masterpiece of doublespeak.

At what point does hero-worship become unhealthy? When it denies reality, attempts to make its subject more than human, and uses the hero's charisma for unworthy ends. Saints while on earth were often not particularly saintly at all, clashing with authority, following

an inner vision few others understood, in despair one day and ecstasy the next; ahead of or out of step with their own times. Today their followers do not usually deny their hero's human frailties. It was that special spark, the divine impulse, that led them in spite of their failings to inspire others. Yet it seems that too often Opus Dei in their literature and pronouncements wish to deny their founder, ordinary members of his organisation, and even in a sense the founder's family the dignity of their ordinary humanity, the record of disappointment and falling short that is part of every man and woman's story. Surely Josemaria Escriva's achievements are all the more remarkable because he was as human and fallible as anyone else (*The Tablet*, 26/3/1983:287-288).

As we have seen, at times the primary loyalty of Opus Dei members seems directed towards their own organisation rather than the Church of which they are also members. Though on a one-to-one basis members can be relaxed and understanding, in any public discussion the Opus Dei view is seen as the correct one (Farrell 17/4/1992: page un-numbered). As I travelled and read about the prelature, the same stock phrases and images kept on coming up again and again, much like the carefully prepared speeches of doorstep evangelists (*Finding God in the World* 1972; Vallely 25/5/1995: page un-numbered; Garvey 1993:3-4; Byrne 1984:4-8; 10-15, etc). Members enthusiastically explained and defended their faith, always in very similar words.

Finally I realised where I had experienced this approach before – in Eastern Europe when Communism still ruled, when there was one prevailing world view and no other opinions were seen as valid. As Meredith McGuire points out, to keep a world-view intact, it is necessary to isolate oneself from competing views – and to swiftly refute other views that invade one's boundaries (McGuire 1992:256). There was the same dogmatic loyalty to the cause, the same insistence that what you had seen or heard must be interpreted differently, according to the party line and vocabulary, and the same sense of an enlightened world living apart, free from the shackles of an outer society lost in error and schism. There was even the same missionary zeal to convert outsiders to the cause. This comparison is not intended to be offensive to Opus Dei. I met many fine Communist men and women who spent their lives working selflessly for their communities. They were totally devoted to their ideal of a better, purer world.

Some Catholics I have met feel that any kind of contact with Opus Dei would be interpreted as a sign of weakness, or, worse, complicity. It is true that priests who allow Opus Dei to use their parish churches, or extend hospitality to members, are often viewed as sympathisers. It is not particularly helpful, however, to refuse to dialogue with Opus Dei. It simply makes martyrs of members, and encourages an isolationist stance. As most Catholics realise, there are many fine talented people in Opus Dei. A little open-ness and sharing of views on both sides could only be beneficial. Naturally it would not be easy to persuade the prelature's leadership to participate and put its "unique" status at risk in any

way. A great deal of good will would be needed on both sides.

Opus Dei is often accused of being hostile and critical towards other individuals and groups in the Catholic Church. While carrying out my research I also encountered plenty of hostility towards Opus Dei, even from people who knew nothing of the organisation. Some Catholic liberals, I found, were more dismissive and judgmental of others than the most ardent CUF or Ecclesia Dei member I met. They simply brushed aside anyone who did not agree with their views. It was interesting to observe the dualistic mind-set that some liberals criticise in others emerging here. Anything that did not agree with their current agenda was seen as suspect and unworthy of consideration.

It is a fact that in many respects Opus Dei, like CUF and other traditionalist groups, simply follows the current teachings of the Magisterium. In promoting this teaching they are being loyal Catholics. Liberals, I am sure, often follow their own agenda. They claim that Opus Dei does not live by the Papal encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, and puts too much emphasis on matters of obedience and sexual morality. While this may be true, liberals would also be selective in which teachings they emphasise. Do they, for example, forbid couples to use artificial contraception, condemn homosexual acts and pre-marital heterosexual relations, and ensure that lay persons carry out only Vatican-sanctioned duties during Mass? In many cases both liberals and conservatives follow the teachings of the Magisterium more closely when these coincide with their personal agendas.

The days when princes and prelates, liberal or conservative, ruled by force and personal whim are dying. Better educated and more socially aware communities will not just blindly follow instructions issued from above. In spite of some recent increase in traditional religious observance, the Church is changing. Women demand equal respect and opportunity with men. Fewer men are willing to take on what is now seen as a lonely and demanding vocation – a life in the priesthood. Protestantism, socialism and atheism are making serious inroads especially into traditionally Catholic areas such as South America.

In spite of these concerns, however, the end does not always justify the means, especially for those who profess to follow Christ (Wookey 1996:19-20). No organisation, whether claiming divine inspiration or not, can place itself above human law and intervention even for the purpose of winning souls. There is resistance still in some quarters of the Vatican, as well as in various movements, to accepting the validity of constructive criticism and reform. John Quinn, the retired Archbishop of San Francisco, recently pointed out that if the Church, like all human institutions, is in need of constant reform, then it must also be open to necessary criticism and the reality of change (*The Tablet*, 11/12/1999:1678).

It is in my opinion an issue of simple justice that any organisation, political, charitable, religious or any other, that operates in the public domain, soliciting public donations and support and seeking new members, should in turn be accountable to the public when serious

complaints are made. These complaints may prove to be groundless, in which case the organisation is publicly vindicated. It can do no harm to a reputable movement to register itself with an impartial public scrutineer who will regularly go over the books and deal with any public concerns or cases of conflict involving the organisation. In Opus Dei's case, scrupulous book-keeping at local level accounts for expenditure down to the last cent. Issues involving prelature personnel or conflict with outsiders may be harder to resolve.

However, accountability is a key issue today in all areas of life from parenting to providing medical services, running a business, and banding together in a collectivity for social, educational or religious purposes. Those who wish to operate in the public arena must also be willing to accept public scrutiny when this is required.

Opus Deists' public image, successful, articulate and well-groomed, offers certain people what they seek. This prelature of the spirit is also very much of this world, concerned with image and success, proud of its important members, quality buildings, academic achievements, and prestigious contacts and positions. It presents a disciplined, clean-cut image to the world. The prelature welcomes people who might otherwise be lost in the crowd in a large parish church. It treats them as individuals, accepts, grooms and supports them, helps them develop particular skills and interests they may have. In some societies it raises one's status to be accepted into membership of Opus Dei.

Though Opus Dei is swimming against the tide of popular culture and thought, it still attracts a range of bright young people to its ranks. Not everyone wants a life of consumerism and liberal excess. Opus Dei thrives on challenge, putting its views forward in seminars and forums all around the world, publishing and broadcasting these views, stepping into vacant positions no one else wants, and building up fading churches and parishes, such as St. Mary of the Angels in Chicago. Members are optimistic and hard working. Success breeds success. Where they fail to win through persuasion, they may eventually triumph because of the apathy of others.

Secular attractions and cares have lessened the commitment of many westerners to the local parish even when they still attend their local church. They are no longer willing to contribute their time and resources to their church community to the extent that their parents and grandparents did. It seems that in many instances it is left to the disciplined apostles of the 20th century movements, lay and ordained, to breathe new life and purpose into dwindling parishes. They are, of course, acting on orders, and have their own plan for the revitalised churches. Long time parishioners may find themselves marginalised as the newcomers impose a rigorous new regime to suit their own tastes and beliefs.

Members of the new movements may well believe that a return to a strict single world view would benefit the whole community – on their movement's terms. However, as the

university chaplain mentioned in Chapter 6 pointed out, the expectation today is that people will be given the opportunity to reach their full potential through independent informed decision-making, rather than unquestioningly obeying a leader. Clocking up “points” or “indulgences” through the careful observance of rules and regulations is not everyone’s path to salvation. “The Lord wants your heart, not your hide,” a senior Jesuit reminded journalist Henry Kamm when he was researching an article on Opus Dei (Kamm 3/1/1984:42).

Some element of myth is usually present in stories of heroes and founders, but it is unhelpful to stretch credibility and expectation too far. It simply undermines others’ confidence and trust. Individuals inside the prelature’s doors are in fact as marvellously human as anyone else. A beautiful Spanish numerary in her 50’s proudly told me, “I could get a man even now if I wanted.” A priest with a particularly caring manner attracted a following of released psychiatric patients, not all of them Catholic. One particular event involving another priest comes to mind. A women’s evening recollection was interrupted by a dishevelled drunken man who blundered into the church in the middle of the priest’s talk on the prodigal son. The drunk slumped into an empty pew and listened to the proceedings as best he could. The women present were nervous and uncomfortable for the rest of the recollection. One or two, forgetting the moral the priest had just presented, were openly angry at the intrusion. The man, it transpired, was just out of prison and at a loss to know what to do next. The priest finally stepped in, asked the man if he could remember where he was staying, got him firmly by the hand and led him away into the windy night to drive him home. The image of this incongruous pair disappearing hand in hand into the dark stayed with me long after most of the improving talks were forgotten.

“He lived for God,” said Salvador Bernal of Escriva, “and was also marvellously human” (Bernal 1977:8). This is not only a fitting epitaph for Opus Dei’s founder, but an apt description of its members. They have much in the way of talent, initiative and faith to offer the wider Church if only barriers could be lowered and more shared activities take place.

There are layers of highly technical discussion and debate possible on various issues concerning Opus Dei, from the Christian understanding of sanctification, and concern over the prelature’s methods of operating, to the organisation’s “lay” or secular status, and the whole matter of whether Opus Dei is or not best suited to personal prelature status. Though the prelature has a minor role in Australasian Catholic life, it has the numbers and influence where it counts, in the European heart of the Church. These issues are thus important to anyone who is concerned with the future of Catholicism in the 21st century and beyond. The possibility of an Opus Dei pope, or an Opus Dei dominated Church, has serious implications for the whole world. There is scope for the writing of a great many books yet on Opus Dei – works that will hopefully move away from both accusatory and defensive monologue, and will, like Joan Estruch’s, attempt to examine the case fairly from both sides.

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TIMELINE OF OPUS DEI MEMBERSHIP FOR ADULTS 18 AND OVER

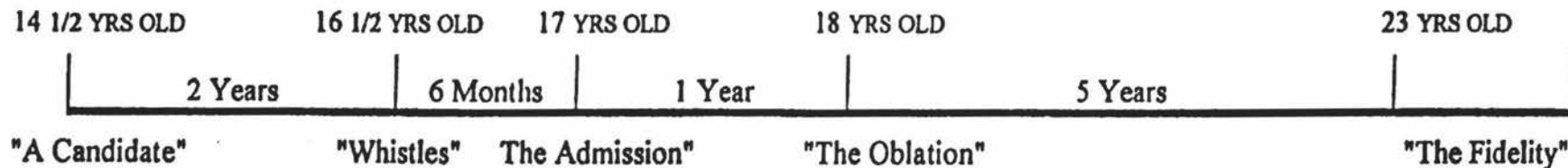
Write the letter
to the Prelate

Oral contract renewed every March 19th



TIMELINE OF OPUS DEI MEMBERSHIP FOR MINORS

Oral contract renewed every March 19th



APPENDIX B

The Opus Dei Oath Of Fidelity

The Oblate declares:

In the full exercise of my freedom I declare my firm intention to strive with all my ability to attain a state of sanctity and to exercise the apostolate, according to the spirit and customs of Opus Dei. From this date until renewing my oath on 19 March next, I pledge:

1. To remain obedient to the Prelature and other authorised persons of the Prelature, and apply myself in all things that pertain to the specific undertakings of the Prelature; and
2. To fulfil all duties that pertain to being a numerary of Opus Dei and to observe the Norms by which the Prelature is governed, and also to observe all legal prescriptions of the Prelature and other authorised persons of authority belonging to the Prelature – in accordance with its Codex Iuris, spirit and apostolate.

A Regional Vicar of the Prelature declares in the presence of the Oblate and two witnesses, members of the Prelature, at least one of whom must be a numerary:

As a Regional Vicar of the Prelature, I solemnly declare that beginning from the moment you join the Prelature as a numerary member, and for as long as you remain a numerary member, Opus Dei assumes the following responsibilities:

1. To give you a continuous formation – doctrinal, spiritual, ascetic and apostolic – and also to provide you, through the priests of the Prelature, with personal pastoral guidance; and
2. To undertake such other responsibilities which, in relation to Prelature's faithful are set out in the Codex Iuris proper to the Prelature.

APPENDIX C

Cooperators of Opus Dei

What is a Cooperator of the Opus Dei Prelature?

Cooperators of Opus Dei help the apostolates of Opus Dei in some way, without being members of the Prelature. A special vocation is not needed.

Many Cooperators are relatives, friends, colleagues, or neighbours of members of the Prelature. Often they will have benefitted spiritually from the apostolate of Opus Dei, or will have an appreciation for the work of personal and social development which the Prelature promotes through a wide range of apostolic undertakings. Non Catholics and non Christians may also become Cooperators.

What is involved in being a Cooperator of Opus Dei?

Cooperators strive to help the Prelature in its apostolate of fostering a deep awareness of the universal call to holiness at all levels of society, and especially an awareness of the sanctifying value of daily work and the fulfilment of one's ordinary duties as a Christian.

This help can be spiritual or material. Cooperators undertake to pray for Opus Dei and its apostolic activities, if possible every day. Material help can take the form of donations, or the giving of one's time or practical services to an apostolic undertaking of the Prelature.

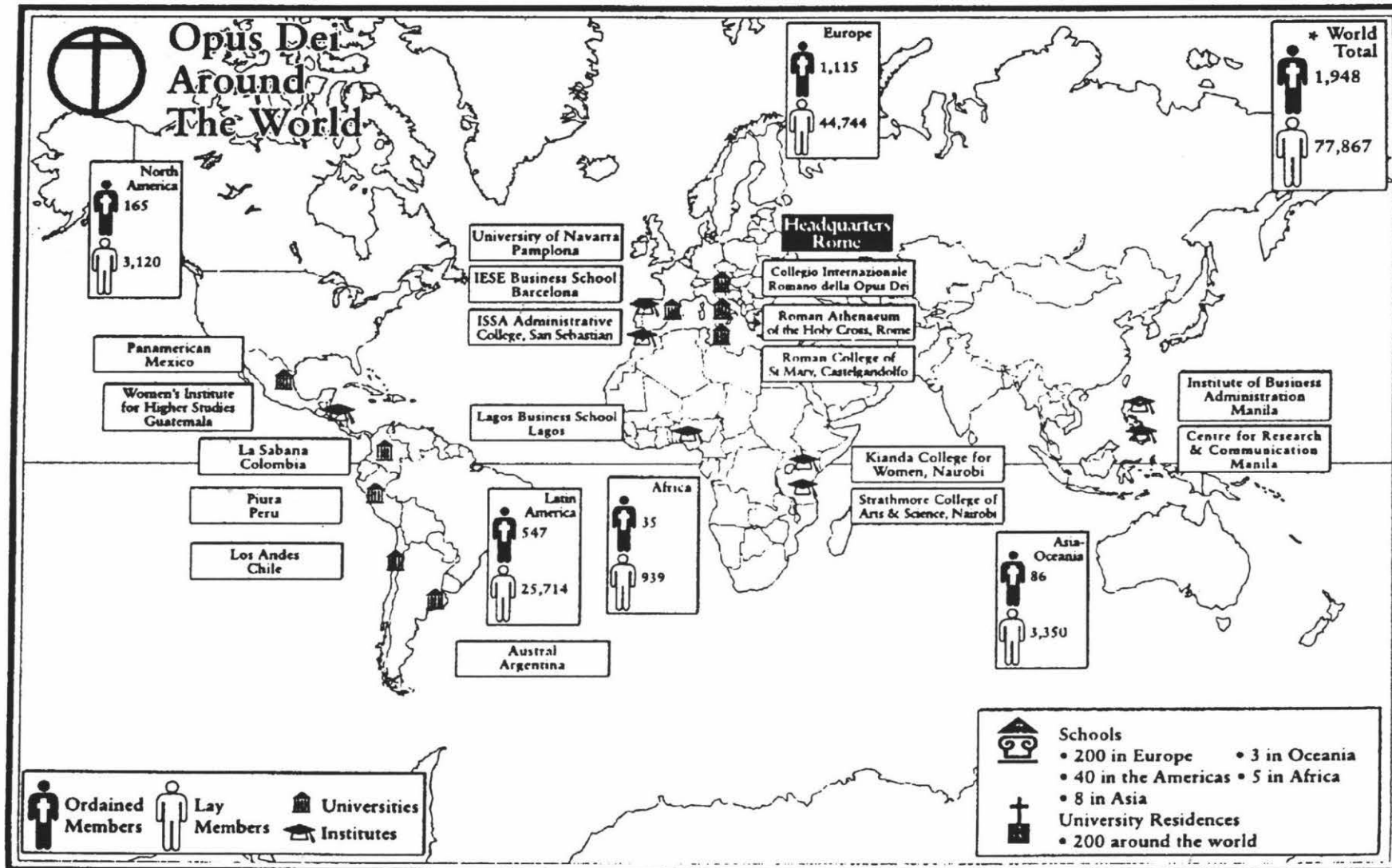
What benefits do the Cooperators of Opus Dei receive?

Members of Opus Dei pray daily for all who help or have helped the Prelature in any way. Priests of the Prelature offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the eternal repose of the souls of deceased Cooperators on specified occasions. In addition, the Holy See has granted indulgences which Cooperators may gain on certain days during the year under the usual conditions established by the Church, and if out of devotion they renew their commitment as Cooperators.

How is a Cooperator appointed?

A Cooperator is proposed by a member of Opus Dei and then appointed by the Regional Vicar. Once the proposal is approved the person is notified and becomes a Cooperator on the date on which he or she accepts the appointment. This is one of the occasions on which Cooperators who are Catholics may gain a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.

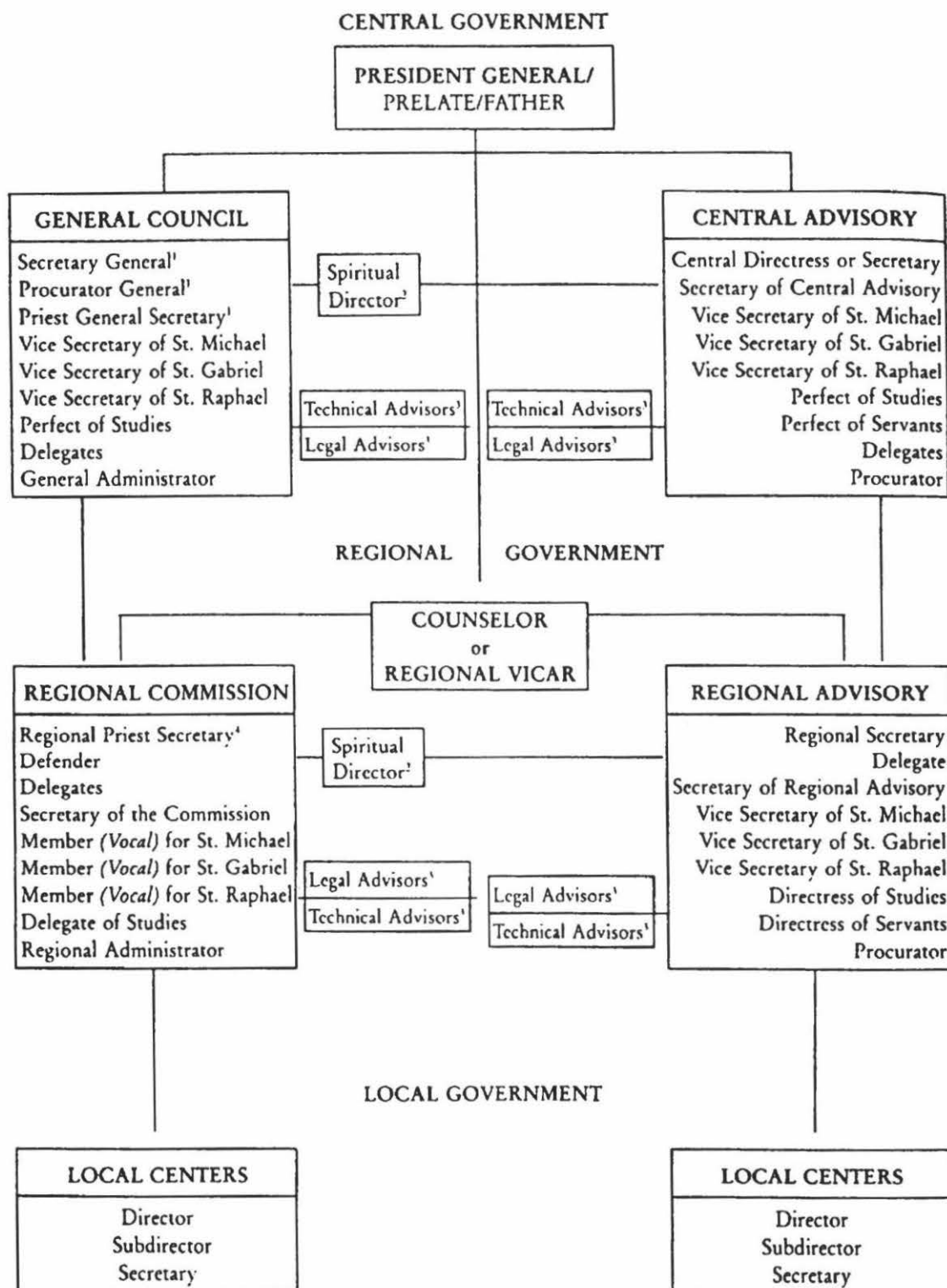
Each Cooperator receives a card signed by the Regional Vicar showing the date of the appointment, together with details of the indulgences available to Catholic Cooperators.



* Source: Annuario Pontificio 1995
(All other figures are approximative)

APPENDIX E

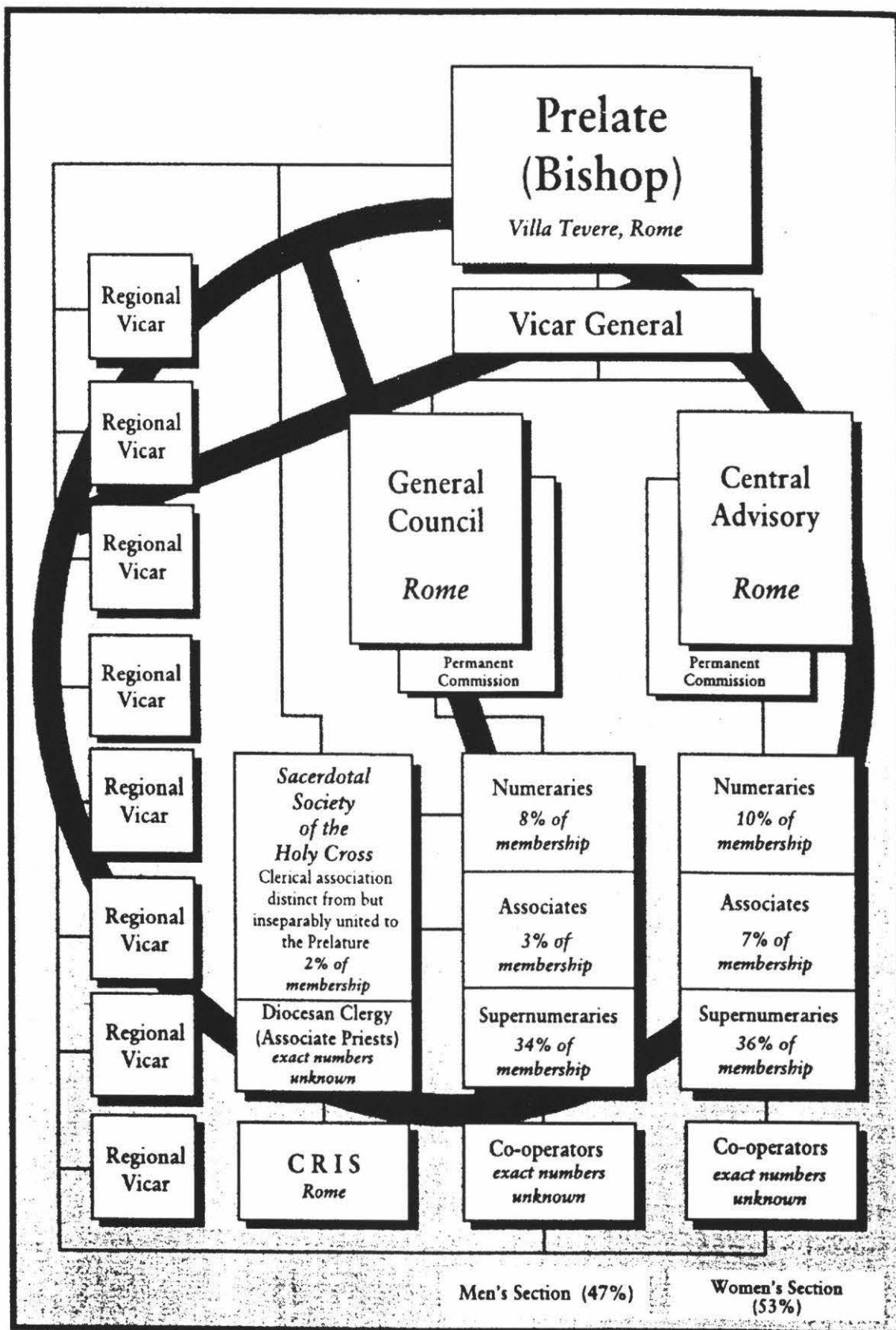
OPUS DEI CENTRAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



1. Belong to both General Council and Central Advisory
2. Has voice but no vote in
3. Advisory groups to Central and Regional Governments
4. Like the Counselor is also a Regional Advisor

APPENDIX E

THE STRUCTURE OF OPUS DEI



APPENDIX F

Summary of Opus Dei's 1982 Constitution

Opus Dei's printed constitution opens with a letter, *Ut Sit*, from John Paul II, explaining the history of Opus Dei's seeking the appropriate juridical structure and setting out in 7 sections the terms of the creation of the personal prelate. Following is a *Declaratio* from the Congregation for Bishops, a short decree from the apostolic nuncio to Italy, and a letter, *Non Ignoratis*, from Escriva, dated 2nd October 1958. This states that Opus Dei no longer wishes to be a secular institute, and insists that members are not religious or missionaries. He also deals with accusations of manipulation and secrecy involving his organisation. A letter from del Portillo follows, declaring that the personal prelate is the "definitive legal configuration for our vocation," as inspired on 2nd October 1928. He stresses the lay status of members. He also comments on the status of priests who wish to join the Sacerdotal Society of the Holy Cross. There will be no conflict of loyalty, he says: priests will still owe obedience to their bishop.

The new Constitutions (*Codex Iuris Particularis Operis Dei* – the Code of Law Proper to Opus Dei) have 5 major sections, divided into chapters. Walsh points out that the regulations listed here are set out in the same way as the Catholic Church's Code of Canon Law.

The Constitutions of Opus Dei, says Walsh, though belonging to a spiritually based organisation, are "strictly juridical," though the Church now places more emphasis on the work of the spirit and less on the minute observance of rules.

The nature of the prelate and its purpose is explained. The prelate has both lay and clerical input worldwide, with the priests incardinated into the prelate, and the laity "incorporated" into the Work.

Opus Dei is about the sanctifying of its members through the exercise of Christian virtues. It is open to all kinds of people, but especially intellectuals. Members' apostolate is an outreach into society.

Means of achieving sanctification, such as prayer and theological study, are listed.

Members also achieve sanctity and carry out their apostolate through fulfilling their professional duties. Lay and clerical members work together in harmony.

All members are at the "disposition" of the prelate. The various ranks of members are listed. If co-operators are not Catholic, members are to pray for their conversion.

Rules of admission are discussed. Candidates must have the required qualities and be at least 17 years old.

Candidates must spend at least 6 months working in the apostolate before admission.

Recruits who had even just begun to enter another religious organisation previously are not acceptable; neither are former students of apostolic schools.

Students at major seminaries or priests already ordained are also banned.

Candidates must provide for themselves, and their families if required, by their own endeavours. They must also contribute generously to the upkeep of apostolic works.

Candidates should make use of the social security system in their country if they need help of any kind. The prelature will care for needy celibates if necessary – and their parents as well, though there is no legal obligation.

Clerical members are to be drawn from the celibate ranks of Opus Dei, and their main task is to care for other members spiritually. Co-operators who are members of the diocesan clergy aid Opus Dei through prayer and ministry.

The Prelature decides who will be ordained, and assigns tasks to priests. The hearing of confessions is important, as is being in communion with the local clergy.

Priests and deacons incardinated into a diocese may become oblate (associate) supernumerary members of Opus Dei. Their superior remains the local bishop.

Opus Dei does not offer an alternative hierarchy. The diocesan priests who become involved with the prelature, however, will have a spiritual director appointed by Opus Dei's regional vicar.

The religious obligations of members are listed. They must attend Mass every day, and follow a schedule of prayer, reading and retreat.

They must avoid pride, and assaults on their chastity.

Work is seen as the outstanding human value. It is a means of personal union with Christ.

Members must venerate and obey the Pope and his bishops, and Opus Dei authorities.

Members are to follow their own conscience in political matters, as long as this view does not contradict Catholic teaching.

Collective action, even taking part in a religious procession as a group, is to be avoided. Members are to shun secrecy, however, and own their membership when necessary.

The names of Opus Dei vicars and council members are to be made public.

No publications are to be put out in the name of Opus Dei.

Natural virtues are to be cultivated.

Fraternal correction is allowed for.

Members are to behave as pilgrims in this world, but may live according to their station.

Requirements for the religious education of members are given.

The prelature follows the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, where this agrees with the Magisterium.

Opus Dei does not have any opinion of its own, the rule states, on philosophical or theological issues on which members may make up their own minds.

Members are to be spiritually concerned with all levels of society, but especially those within their own profession.

Intellectuals, and those with important positions in society especially should be befriended.

Chaplains and teachers of religion are available for chosen schools.

The governance of the prelature is set out. Each area has a regional councillor. All offices except that of Prelate are temporary. Regions are responsible for meeting their own obligations, and must observe local civil law.

The Prelate is to be chosen by a specially summoned congress. His election is to be confirmed by the Pope. Priests and laymen appointed to the congress must have been full members for 9 years, and be 32 or older.

There are exacting requirements for the Prelate: he must be the son of a legitimate marriage, a member of at least 10 years' standing, and a priest for 5 years. He is to be 40 years of age or older, pious and well educated.

His role is basically a supervisory one. Two Guardians are appointed to care for his spiritual and bodily health.

A vicar auxiliary is appointed to assist the Prelate. The general council is made up of consultors – the vicar auxiliary, secretary general, vicar for the women's section, 3 vice-secretaries, one delegate from each region, the prefect of studies and general administrator. There is a permanent commission of the general council. Some members may be laymen, though the majority must be priests.

The women's governance is different. They do not have a congress to elect the prelate, but have all the others. The Prelate and his chief male assistants preside. There is a "central assessor" instead of a general council, consisting of the same offices as the men's, but with some different titles. They also have a prefect of the auxiliaries. The Prelate rules over all these offices, along with the vicar auxiliary, secretary general and priest central secretary.

There are two other posts for the whole of Opus Dei. They may not be held by members of the general council. The procurator represents the prelature's interest to the Holy See. The spiritual prefect is in charge of spiritual guidance throughout the prelature.

The prelature is divided into regions, each governed by a "regional councillor" nominated by the Prelate with his council's approval. The regional councillor may have a commission of up to 12 people to advise him. One member, the Defender, makes sure the rules are kept. Government of local centres is in the hands of the centre directors, who have their own council.

Every 10 years there must be a gathering in each region to examine progress. All present and past office-holders attend, as well as all electors. Even non-Catholic co-operators may send reports or comments to this gathering. Any conclusions reached at these get-togethers must be approved by the Prelate.

Opus Dei is “immediately and directly” subject to the Holy See and not to diocesan bishops: all members must obey the Pope. Otherwise they are like all Catholics subject to the local bishop.

The Prelate must see that all decrees and utterances of the Holy See that are relevant to Opus Dei are known to members.

Frequent contact with the local bishop is ordered. Members must co-operate with all local episcopal rules and regulations. The ordinary has to be informed before a centre is opened. Each approval of a men’s centre implies that a women’s will be opened as well. There is to be a chapel, with exposition on the first Friday of each month. The bishop is asked to give priests permission to say Mass twice a day, and possibly 3 times on Sundays and holy days.

A bishop may visit only the church, the tabernacle and the confessionals. If Opus Dei takes over an existing church on behalf of the diocese, the rules are different. Here a contract must be agreed to in advance.

The Code is the foundation of the Prelature. Its norms are to be holy, inviolable and perpetual. Any changes can be made only by the Holy See.

Regulations in the Code which originate in divine or ecclesiastical laws have the force of these laws. Those to do with government oblige in conscience. It is a sin to transgress against even the smallest rule if this is done out of formal contempt.

Whatever is laid down in the Code for men and expressed in male language is equally applicable to women, except where the content makes it clear there is a difference, or a special provision is made.

(Summarised from Michael Walsh’s translation of the Latin, which appears in *The Secret World of Opus Dei* 1989 pp. 84–105).

APPENDIX G

TITLE IV: PERSONAL PRELATURES

- Can. 294** Personal prelatures may be established by the Apostolic See after consultation with the Bishops' Conferences concerned. They are composed of deacons and priests of the secular clergy. Their purpose is to promote an appropriate distribution of priests, or to carry out special pastoral or missionary enterprises in different regions or for different social groups.
- Can. 295** §1 A personal prelature is governed by statutes laid down by the Apostolic See. It is presided over by a Prelate as its proper Ordinary. He has the right to establish a national or an international seminary, and to incardinate students and promote them to orders with the title of service of the prelature.
- §2 The Prelate must provide both for the spiritual formation of those whom he has promoted with the above title, and for their becoming support.
- Can. 296** Lay people can dedicate themselves to the apostolic work of a personal prelature by way of agreements made with the prelature. The manner of this organic co-operation and the principal obligations and rights associated with it, are to be duly defined in the statutes.
- Can. 297** The statutes are likewise to define the relationships of the prelature with the local Ordinaries in whose particular Churches the prelature, with the prior consent of the diocesan Bishop, exercises or wishes to exercise its pastoral or missionary activity.

Title IV
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The *personal prelatore* is a new concept. Prior to Vat. II some provisions had been made for various groups of people on the basis that, within these groups, jurisdiction was personal rather than territorial. Thus, e.g. military vicariates were established for military personnel, separate hierarchies for several different ritual Churches were set up in the same territory to cater for the needs of the faithful of each rite, etc. In August 1954 the parish of Pontigny was established as a prelacy *nullius*, with its own prelate and special norms:¹ this gave a solid juridical structure to the so-called 'Mission de France,' an association of secular priests dedicated to missionary activity within France; the purpose of the prelacy was to provide a pool of priests who could be sent wherever they were needed in France. Vat. II while upholding the traditional structure of dioceses in the Church,² recognised that this did not meet the needs of all³ and made some concrete proposals, including the establishment of personal prelatures, to deal with this situation.⁴

Further details on these were set out in Pope Paul VI's mp *Ecclesiae Sanctae*.⁵ All of the foregoing forms the basis for the current legislation of the Code on this matter. The only body competent to establish a personal prelatore is the Apostolic See. No local Bishop or group of Bishops may presume to set up a structure similar to this to meet certain regional needs. Before any prelatore is established, however, the Bishops' Conferences concerned (i.e. those in whose territory the proposed prelatore will be operative) must be consulted, though their consent is not required. Membership of a prelatore is confined to 'deacons and priests of the secular clergy'; religious are excluded. The purpose for which a prelatore can be established may vary widely within the terms of this canon: it may be 'to promote an appropriate distribution of priests,' or it may be 'to carry out special pastoral or missionary enterprises in different regions or for different social groups.'

Hitherto only one personal prelatore has been established, that of the *Holy Cross and Opus Dei*. Although that association had been founded in 1938, it had long sought a distinct juridical structure. The results of many years of study were presented to the Congregation for Bishops in 1979. In 1982 that Congregation judged that the structure of the personal prelatore as envisioned by Vat. II best suited the needs of Opus Dei.⁶ Pope John Paul II formally established the prelatore in the same year.⁷

¹ Cf. AAS 46 (1954) 567-574.

² Cf. LG 23: FI I 376.

³ Cf. CD 18: FI I 574.

⁴ Cf. PO 10: FI I 882.

⁵ Cf. ES I 4: FI I 594-595.

⁶ Cf. SCB *Declaration on the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei* 23. III.1982: AAS 75(1983) 464-468.

⁷ Cf. ap. con *Ut sit validum* 28.XI.1982: AAS 75(1983) 423-425.

Can. 617 The internal government of a personal prelatore is regulated by its statutes. These are drawn up and approved by the Holy See. There is a clear analogy with the particular legislation of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. The Prelature of Opus Dei is governed by its own 'particular code.'¹

Can. 618 This canon sets out in summary form the rights and obligations of the Prelate:

- he has the right to establish a seminary, either a national one or an international one;
- he has the right to incardinate students;
- he has the right to promote them to orders;
- he, therefore, has the obligation to provide for the proper formation of these persons;
- he is obliged to provide for the spiritual welfare of clerics incardinated into the prelatore;
- he is obliged to provide for their fitting support.

It will be for the statutes of each prelatore to spell out these rights and obligations in greater depth and detail.

Can. 619 The Prelate is the proper Ordinary for the clergy of the prelatore. The laity are not, however, removed from the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary, except for what is regarded as their purely internal formation and apostolic work in the conduct of the prelatore (see Can. 296). Incardination of clerics into the prelatore takes place at ordination to the diaconate (see Cann. 265-266 §1). Nothing in the canon suggests that the Prelate will be a Bishop. Hence, unlike Prelates of territorial prelatures, it would appear that he would not have the right to attend meetings of the local Bishops' Conference – unless the approved statutes were expressly to prescribe otherwise.

Can. 620 The laity within a personal prelatore are not subjects as such. They are associated with it by individual agreement. Their role is to dedicate themselves in some measure to the apostolic mission of the prelatore. Details of the nature of their contribution and the consequent rights and obligations within the prelatore are left for the statutes of each prelatore to define. 'There is no reason why laymen, whether celibate or married, should nor dedicate their professional service, through contacts with the prelatore, to its works and enterprises.'²

¹ Cf. *Ut sit validum* II loc cit. 424. The full text of this particular code is published in LE VI 8504-8531.

² ES I 4: FI I 595.

- Can. 296** Lay people can dedicate themselves to the apostolic work of a personal prelatore by way of agreements made with the prelatore. The manner of this organic co-operation and the principal obligations and rights associated with it, are to be duly defined in the statutes.
- Can. 297** The statutes are likewise to define the relationships of the prelatore with the local Ordinaries in whose particular Churches the prelatore, with the prior consent of the diocesan Bishop, exercises or wishes to exercise its pastoral or missionary activity.
- Can. 621** The relationship which must exist between the prelatore and the local Ordinary is not unlike that which ought to exist between local Ordinaries and religious communities established in their territory. Given the Bishop's primary role in the sanctifying, governing and teaching offices of the Church, great pains were taken in the drafting of the canons concerning the apostolate of religious institutes (see especially Cann. 678, 680-683). The statutes of a personal prelatore should take into account the various issues addressed in those canons when it comes to define its own relationship with local Church.¹ Note that the canon speaks of the *diocesan Bishop* – not the local Ordinary – as the competent authority whose consent must be obtained for the exercise of the prelatore's activity; again there are distinct echoes of the relationship between religious institutes and particular Churches (see e.g. Cann. 609 §1, 611, 612, 616 §1).

Title V

Associations of Christ's Faithful Chapter 1 COMMON NORMS

Can. 298 §1 In the church there are associations which are distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. In these associations, Christ's faithful, whether clerics or laity, or clerics and laity together, strive with a common effort to foster a more Perfect life, or to promote public worship or Christian teaching. They may also devote themselves to other works of the apostolate, such as initiatives for evangelisation, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit.

This Title, divided into four chapters, replaces the much more detailed provisions of 622 cc.684-725 of the 1917 Code. It is logically structured, dealing first with norms common to all associations, then successively with public and with private associations; and finally with special norms for exclusively lay associations. The influence of Vat. II, particularly its decree on the Apostolate of Lay People,² is significantly noticeable throughout.

This opening canon begins by distinguishing these associations from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. Members of Christ's faithful who gather in...

¹ Cf e.g. the particular code of *Opus Dei* nn.171-180: LE VI 8527-8528.

² Cf. FI I 766-798.

APPENDIX H



**Blessed Josemaría Escrivá
Founder of Opus Dei**

PRAYER

O God, you granted countless graces to your priest Blessed Josemaría, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of a Christian. Grant that I also may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the Church, the Pope, and all souls, with joy and simplicity, lighting up the paths of the earth with faith and love. Deign to grant the canonisation of Blessed Josemaría and, through his intercession, grant me the favour I request . . . (here make your petition).

Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

Blessed Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was born in Barbastro, Spain on 9 January 1902. He was ordained to the priesthood in Saragossa on 28 March 1925.

In Madrid, on 2 October 1928, by divine inspiration he founded Opus Dei, which has opened up to the faithful a new way of sanctification in the middle of the world, through exercising one's ordinary professional work and in the fulfilment of one's family, social and personal obligations. Thus it has been a leaven of fervent Christian life in every environment. On 14 February 1930 Blessed Josemaría Escrivá understood, with the grace of God, that Opus Dei had also to develop its apostolate among women. On 14 February 1943 he founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, inseparably united to Opus Dei. Opus Dei received its definitive approval from the Holy See on 16 June 1950; and, on 28 November 1982 it was established as a personal Prelature. This legal framework had been desired and foreseen by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá.

Through a life of constant prayer and penance, exercising heroically all the virtues, with loving dedication and untiring concern for all souls, and with a continuous and unconditional self-surrender to the will of God, he fostered and directed the expansion of Opus Dei throughout the world. When he rendered up his soul to God, Opus Dei had spread to five continents, with over 60,000 members of 80 nationalities, serving the Church with the same spirit of complete union with, and deep veneration for, the Pope and the Bishops which Blessed Josemaría Escrivá had always practised and instilled in his sons and daughters.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was the root and centre of the interior life of the Founder. A deep sense of his divine filiation, maintained in the continuous presence of the one and Triune God, moved him to seek in all things the most complete identification with Jesus Christ, to have a tender and strong devotion to Our Lady and Saint Joseph, a continual and confident friendship with the Holy Guardian Angels, and to be a sower of peace and joy along all the paths of the earth.

On repeated occasions Monsignor Escrivá had offered his life for the Church and the Roman Pontiff. Our Lord accepted that offering, and on 26 June 1975, in a truly saintly way, Monsignor Escrivá gave up his soul to God in Rome, in the room where he worked.

His body rests in the prelatial Church of Our Lady of Peace, Viale Bruno Buozzi, 75, Rome, continually accompanied by the prayer and gratitude of his sons and daughters, and of the countless people who have come closer to God, drawn by the example and teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei. His Cause of Canonisation was presented in Rome on 19 February 1981. On 9 April 1990 the Holy Father Pope John Paul II declared the heroic nature of his Christian virtues, and, on 6 July 1991 decreed the miraculous character of a cure attributed to his intercession. The Founder of Opus Dei was beatified by His Holiness John Paul II in Rome on 17 May 1992.

Those who obtain favours through the intercession of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá are asked to notify the Office of the Vice-Postulation of Opus Dei in Australia, P.O. Box 145, Kensington, N.S.W. 2033.

With the ecclesiastical approval of the Vicariate of Rome.



Bishop Alvaro del Portillo
Prelate of Opus Dei

PRAYER
 for private devotion

O God our merciful Father, you granted to your servant Bishop Alvaro, the grace to be an outstanding Pastor in the service of the Church and a most faithful son and successor of Blessed Josemaria, Founder of Opus Dei. Grant that I may also learn to respond faithfully to the demands of my Christian vocation, turning all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the Kingdom of Christ. Deign to glorify your servant Alvaro and, through his intercession, grant me the favour I request... (here make your petition). Amen

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgement of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid, Spain, on 11 March 1914. He was the third of eight children in a deeply Christian family. He held doctorates in Civil Engineering, Philosophy and Canon Law.

In 1935 he joined Opus Dei, which had been founded by Blessed Josemaria on 2 October 1928. By sanctifying his professional work and fulfilling his ordinary duties, he lived the vocation to Opus Dei with complete faithfulness. He carried out a broad apostolate amongst his fellow students and workmates. He soon became Blessed Josemaria's strongest support and he stayed at his side as his closest helper for almost forty years.

On 25 June 1944 he was ordained to the priesthood. From then on he was completely devoted to his priestly ministry of serving the members of Opus Dei and all souls. In 1946 he settled in Rome with Blessed Josemaria. His tireless service to the Church was also shown in his hard work for the Holy See as a consulter for several Congregations of the Roman Curia and especially in the active role he played in the Second Vatican Council.

On 15 September 1975 he was elected the first successor of Blessed Josemaria. On the 28 November 1982, when the Work was made a Personal Prelature, the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, appointed him the Prelate of Opus Dei. On 6 January 1991 the Pope ordained him a bishop. All of Bishop Alvaro's work in government was characterised by faithfulness to the Founder and his message and by tireless pastoral work to extend the apostolate of the Prelature in the service of the Church.

His self-giving in carrying out the mission he had received was based, as Blessed Josemaria had taught, on a deep sense of divine filiation, which was the result of the action of the Holy Spirit. This led him to seek an identification with Jesus Christ in a trusting abandonment to the will of God the Father. This was constantly nourished by prayer, the Eucharist and a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. His love for the Church was seen in his deep union with the Pope and the Bishops. His charity with everyone, his tireless care for his children in Opus Dei, his humility, prudence and fortitude, cheerfulness and simplicity, his self-forgetfulness and his burning desire to win souls for Christ, which was also reflected in his episcopal motto, *regnare Christum volumus!* as well as the goodness, serenity and the good sense of humour which radiated from him, are outstanding features of the portrait of his soul.

Early on the morning of 23 March 1994, a few hours after returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he had followed with fervent piety the earthly steps of Jesus Christ, from Nazareth to the Holy Sepulchre, Our Lord called this good and faithful servant to himself. His last Mass had been celebrated in the Church of the Cenacle in Jerusalem on the morning before.

That same day, March 23, the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, went to pray before his mortal remains. These now rest in the Crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace (viale Bruno Bouzzi, 75 in Rome), always accompanied by the prayer and love of the faithful of Opus Dei and thousands of other people.

Those who obtain favours through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro are asked to notify the office of Vice Postulation of Opus Dei in Australia, P.O. Box 145, Kensington, NSW 2033.

With ecclesiastical approval of the Vicariate of Rome.

APPENDIX I



**The Servant of God
Isidoro Zorzano**

PRAYER

Almighty God, you filled your Servant Isidoro with an abundant wealth of grace as he carried out his professional duties in the midst of the world: grant that I may also learn to sanctify my ordinary work and bring the light of Christ to my friends and colleagues. Deign to glorify your Servant and through his intercession grant me the favor I request... (here make your petition). Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgment of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

Isidoro Zorzano was born in Buenos Aires, on September 13, 1902.

He did his secondary schooling in Logroño, Northern Spain, and went on to study at the Industrial Engineering School of the University of Madrid, where he graduated in 1927.

He began his working life in Malaga as a manager in the workshops of the Andalusian Railways and later lectured at the Industrial College there.

On a trip to Madrid in 1930 he spoke to an old school friend of his, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, of his desire to devote himself to God in the middle of the world and he asked to be admitted to Opus Dei which was then just starting up. Isidoro kept his job in Malaga for a while and then moved up to Madrid to another job with a railway company. In all of his activities he bore constant witness to his christian faith. He was exemplary in the way he did his work, in his love of justice and his zeal in promoting projects to help the needy, in his faith and charity shown in works of catechesis and formation in the most neglected sectors of society.

With his fidelity, Isidoro was always a sure support for the Founder of Opus Dei. In the years of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), in Madrid, he showed true heroism in his love for the Church and his zeal for souls. In persevering obedience to the teaching of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, he carried out his work in intimate union with Christ Our Lord. He lived in the constant presence of God throughout the day and his spiritual life was marked by a deep and tender spirit of divine filiation, by a great love for Our Blessed Lady, Mother of God and our Mother, and by a real desire to seek identification with Christ through an intense spirit of mortification and penance.

He died with a reputation for sanctity on July 15, 1943 after a long and painful illness which he bore both valiantly and cheerfully.

The Cause for his canonization was opened in Madrid in 1948.

Those who obtain favours through the intercession of Isidoro Zorzano are asked to notify the Office of Vice-Postulation of Opus Dei in Australia, P.O. Box 145, Kensington, NSW 2033 (or P.O. Box 7026, Hamilton, New Zealand).

With ecclesiastical approval.



**The Servant of God
Montserrat Grases**

PRAYER

O God, you granted your Servant Montserrat the grace of a serene and cheerful surrender to your Divine Will, lived with admirable simplicity in the midst of the world: grant that I may know how to lovingly offer you all my daily activities, turning them into a Christian service to others. Deign to glorify your Servant and through her intercession grant me the favor I request... (here make your petition). Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgment of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

Montserrat Grases was born in Barcelona, Spain, on July 10, 1941 into a deeply Catholic family. Along with her eight brothers and sisters, she was brought up by her parents in an environment of true piety and love of freedom.

After her secondary schooling, she studied at the Professional College for Women in Barcelona.

In 1957 she felt in her soul that Our Lord was calling her to follow the path of sanctity in Opus Dei, to live her Christian life to the full in the middle of the world, and, after due consideration and consultation, she asked to be admitted to the Work. In her struggle to achieve sanctity she stood out for her love of the Sacred Humanity of Christ, her eucharistic devotion, her love for Our Blessed Lady, her deep humility and her efforts to be of service to others. She knew how to find God in the loving fulfillment of her studies and her work and in the ordinary little things of every day.

In June 1958 it was discovered that she had bone cancer in one leg, the cause of intense pains which she bore with both serenity and heroic fortitude. Throughout her illness, thanks to her contagious and enduring cheerfulness, and her capacity—born of a real zeal for souls—for friendship, she kept bringing many of her friends and schoolmates closer to God. She died on Maundy Thursday, March 26, 1959.

The Cause for her canonization was opened in Barcelona in 1962.

Those who obtain favours through the intercession of Monserrat Grases are asked to notify the Office of Vice-Postulation of Opus Dei in Australia, P.O. Box 145, Kensington, NSW 2033 (or P.O. Box 7026, Hamilton, New Zealand).

With ecclesiastical approval.

APPENDIX J

YOU NEED TO MAKE A GOOD RETREAT.

From time to time in life, everyone does. The fact is, though, that few people really understand why until they have made one. The experience of a few days spent deeply in the presence of God, praying and reflecting on our life's direction, gives an incomparable richness to our vision of things. A well-made retreat brings peace, vitality, and a youthful confidence: a singular regaining of the happiness we knew as children and a taste of the joyful sense of adventure that all the saints have experienced.

You need to ask God to help you make the very best retreat that you have ever experienced, to help you turn a few days into an important turning-point in your life, one that leads to your own happiness and the happiness of the people whom you most love.

This may strike you as quite a high-reaching ambition. Unrealistic, you may think. But it is not. The fact is that God Himself has ambitions for your happiness that you have scarcely begun to imagine. And His Will for you, for the rest of your life on earth, is what a retreat is all about. The Gospels are filled with stories of people like you, people who discovered, often to their astonishment, new and unsuspected directions for their lives, when they opened themselves to Christ's friendship.

There is so much to think about on a retreat, and the allotted time is so brief but our Lord does not need much time, experience shows, to work His changes in people. But like the people you meet in the Gospels, you too have to open your mind and heart for this encounter with His mercy. You have to stop what you are doing and go to meet Him halfway.

IN SILENCE AND PRAYER

As you probably know, traditionally a retreat is made in silence. For many people this silence is one of its most attractive features. As someone has noted, most of us at this period of history live as though we were encamped in the middle of a carnival: surrounded by the clamour of entertainers and hawkers vying frantically for our attention. Small wonder that the peace of a retreat seems so welcome, a reward in itself. You keep silence for one simple reason. A retreat is not a group activity – it is meant to be made by each person alone. You, along with each of the other participants, are these few days entirely alone in the presence of God. It is in this way that you can begin to speak with Him, and grow to know Him.

There is one central fact to life that the retreat brings to the forefront of your mind. Some day you will leave this earthly life and meet God face to face, alone, just the two of you. The retreat is, so to speak, an introductory preparation for this transcendently important encounter. Christ's entire purpose in the Redemption was your own personal salvation. He suffered and died for you personally, by name, and He would have done this to save just one soul here on earth, yours alone.

Your union with Him at death is meant to be a reunion of intimate friends. Is that what it will be?

PERSONAL CONVERSATION

This friendship, like any other, receives its initial life, and later depth, through personal conversation. On a retreat our Lord wants to spend time speaking with you in the same way that He did with the people of His time: with Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman, and with the repentant Peter as they walked by the shores of the lake.

God has called you to these days of silence so that you and He can talk intimately about the really important things in your life. This personal talk is, in a word, prayer.

So your prayer on a retreat is intended by God to be the best you have ever made with Him – much deeper, more forthright and honest, more heartfelt and sensitive, a moving and affective experience.

READING AND REFLECTION

In your free time during the retreat you will come upon books set out for your personal reading and reflection. Here, among these pages, you will find God speaking. He frequently uses spiritual reading to insinuate an apt and striking message.

The greatest of all readings, of course, is the New Testament. Open the Gospels anywhere and read slowly, reflectively. In the inspired passages before you, you will find the richness and striking vitality of our Lord's personality. Read what He has to say. Spend time alone in the chapel, before the Blessed Sacrament. It is here, alone and hidden, that you will find Him waiting for you. As you kneel or sit in His presence, you are closer to Him physically than the crowds who surrounded Him in Galilee. Ask Him humbly that you learn from what He has been telling you all day in your prayer and in your reading and reflection on your life: "Lord, that I may see."

REPENTANCE

Sometime in the course of the retreat, sooner rather than later, you should try to make the best Confession of your life; a comprehensive and sincerely sorrowful act of repentance for all your sins. Sincere repugnance of sin is indispensable, an absolute must for beginning a new life in God's love.

RESOLUTIONS

A retreat is not meant to be a mere emotional experience, a transitory stirring of sentiments. Its purpose is to transform your daily life, the one you will return to when everything is over.

You must therefore, count on making some few but very concrete resolutions that will give your normal life a deeply spiritual dimension. As you pass your days in your home and workplace, you – like your counterparts described in the Gospels – should find abundant occasions for thanking and serving God. The best thoughts and insights of your retreat should lead to a plan of action, they should directly affect the dealing you have henceforth with God, with your family, and your friends. What should you resolve to do? What habits of service to God should you strive for in the midst of your everyday affairs?

The priest on the retreat can make some concrete suggestions, tailor-made for your personal circumstances. But before you speak with him about these, make a sort of general plan yourself. What ideally, should you try to incorporate in your life?

A NEW LIFE

As you have seen by now, your retreat is much more than a than a few days' rest. It is part of God's ambitious plan for you. He intends to transform you into the saintly, effective, and responsible adult He had in mind when He created you. God wants to use these few days of prayer to show you your life as it is and as He intends it to be. As you look over your life, from childhood to the present you will see how He has subtly arranged things for your happiness, things you hardly noticed before.

Excerpts from *To Make a Good Retreat* by David Chandler.

APPENDIX K

TIMETABLE

Friday	8.00:	Supper/Introduction, etc.
	8.30:	Meditation
	9.00:	Retire
Saturday:	7.30:	Rise
	8.00:	Breakfast
	9.00:	Meditation
	9.30:	Holy Mass
	11.00:	Talk
	12.00:	Meditation
	12.30:	Examination of conscience
	1.00:	Lunch
	2.00:	Visit to the Blessed Sacrament
	3.30:	Talk
	4.00:	Afternoon Tea
	4.30:	Rosary
	5.00:	Meditation
	6.00:	Dinner
	7.30:	Meditation
	8.00:	Benediction Video
	Sunday:	same as Saturday in the morning
2.30:		Rosary
3.15:		Meditation
3.45:		Benediction
4.00:		Afternoon Tea

Sacrament of reconciliation:

The priest will be available for Confession at the following times:

Saturday:	8.30-9.00	8.30-9.00
	2.15-3.30	10.30-11.00
	5.30-6.00	2.15-3.30

APPENDIX L

Is Confession Outdated?

By Fr. John Flader

It is just over 25 years since the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* called for the rites and formulas of Penance to be revised so that they would more clearly express the nature and effect of the Sacrament.

It is 15 years since the New Rite of Penance was introduced in this country.

And it is five years since Pope John Paul's Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, which spoke at length about the importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

One might have thought that with the impetus given by these three documents, we would now be witnessing a renaissance in the use of the Sacrament. It is no secret to anyone that the opposite is the case. The number of confessions being heard in our churches has fallen off dramatically.

What has happened?

Obviously the percentage of Catholics attending Mass has also fallen dramatically in the past 20 years, so that one would expect a corresponding fall-off in confessions. But the drop in confessions has far exceeded that in Mass attendance.

My pastoral experience convinces me that at the heart of the problem are a number of erroneous attitudes regarding this Sacrament, which could be expressed more or less as follows:

1. I haven't committed any serious sins lately and therefore I don't really need to go to confession.

Many people fall into this category. They focus their attention, however, only on the role of Confession as a means of obtaining forgiveness for sin, and they fail to appreciate the many other benefits which stem from the reception of the Sacrament.

In addition to the remission of sins, these benefits include the infusion of sanctifying grace; the conferring of actual grace, to help in the struggle to avoid falling again into the same sins; the growth in sincerity and self-knowledge through the examination of conscience which precedes confession; the growth in humility through the actual confession of sins; the spiritual advice and encouragement received from the priest; the making up for at least part of the temporal punishment owing for the sins confessed, through carrying out the penance indicated by the priest; and of course the great joy which results from every confession, leading in turn to a new beginning in the spiritual struggle.

In a word, confession is a powerful means of growing in holiness.

2. With the new rite of Penance, the Church does not encourage frequent confession anymore; but rather wants to reserve confession for our bigger conversions.

While this attitude became fairly widespread when the new rite was introduced in 1974, it has no basis whatever in Church teaching. On the contrary, in the introduction to the new rite itself we read: "Frequent and careful celebration of this Sacrament is also very useful as a remedy for venial sins. This is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise, but a serious striving to perfect the grace of baptism so that, as we bear in our body the death of Jesus Christ, his life may be seen in us ever more clearly."

And more recently, Pope John Paul II, in an address to priests at the beginning of Lent in 1981, said: "The sphere of the use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation cannot be reduced to the mere hypothesis of grave sins: apart from the considerations of a dogmatic character that could be made in this connection, we recall that confession periodically renewed, the so called confession 'of devotion,' has always accompanied the ascent to holiness in the Church."

Clearly the mind of the Church is to encourage frequent confession.

3. If you have committed a mortal sin you can still receive Communion without going to Confession as long as you say an act of contrition.

This attitude has become fairly widespread in certain circles. It too is mistaken.

In the above-mentioned Lenten homily on Reconciliation in 1981, Pope John Paul said that "the norm taught by St. Paul and by the same Council of Trent, according to which the worthy reception of the Eucharist must be preceded by the confession of sins when one is conscious of mortal sin, is and always will be in force in the Church.

Thus it is not sufficient to say an act of contrition before receiving Communion if one has committed mortal sin; confession is also necessary.

4. But I thought the Church no longer taught the distinction between mortal mortal and venial sin.

Wrong again. The present Pope, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* which followed the 1983 Synod of Bishops meeting, says that "the Synod in fact not only reaffirmed the teaching of the Council of Trent concerning the existence and nature of mortal and venial sins, but it also recalled that mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent."

A person who is conscious of having committed a mortal sin must therefore go to sacramental confession before receiving Holy Communion. Not to do so would be to receive Communion unworthily and to commit a new mortal sin.

Frequent confession, with the examination of conscience which precedes it, is itself an excellent way of recovering this spiritual sensitivity. And it affords the opportunity of clearing up doubts of conscience on what is and what is not mortal sin.

5. I would go to confession but it won't do any good; I know I am going to fall back into the same sins again anyway.

This is the experience of *everyone*. We are all going to fall back into sin. And it is precisely for this reason that Christ instituted the Sacrament.

As long as we are sorry for our sins and are ready to renew the struggle to avoid them, we can be forgiven. We do not need to be sure of success in the struggle, as indeed no one can be.

6. I would love to go to Confession but I'm afraid the priest will not forgive my sin.

There is no sin which the Priest cannot forgive as long as we are truly sorry, be it murder, rape, incest, or any other. Christ forgave the woman caught in adultery and also Zacchaeus, who had wronged people through his tax collecting and he will forgive us too.

7. I find it so embarrassing to confess my sin to another person.

It is always embarrassing to tell one's sins. And some sins are more embarrassing to talk about than others. But that very fact is part of the penitential aspect of the Sacrament and helps to make up for the sins. At the same time, it is a powerful way of fostering humility.

Besides, when some people feel no sense of shame to talk about their intimate life over a cup of coffee or a beer, we should certainly not be ashamed to confess our sins to Christ through the priest, who, moreover, is bound by the seal of confession not to reveal them to anyone.



St. John the Evangelist by El Greco, c. 1600, Madrid

APPENDIX M

PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

Our Lord Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Penance “so that those who have committed sin after Baptism may be reconciled with God whom they have offended and with the Church which they have wounded.” (John Paul II, January 6, 1983).

Since all of us are sinners, we need “to be reconciled with God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Even the most rude and ignorant among us are in need of conversion and purification. The necessary means is something very simple and easy, at the reach of anyone seeking God’s pardon for his sin.

We may say that the only requirement is to have the good will of returning to God like the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19) and acknowledging our sins with true sorrow before his representative, the priest (cf. John 20:23).

Prayer Before Confession

O Almighty and most merciful God, who has made me out of nothing, and redeemed me by the precious blood of your only Son, behold me, O Lord, prostrate at your feet to implore your forgiveness. I desire most sincerely to leave all my evil ways, to forsake this region of death where I have so long lost myself, and to return to you, the fountain of life.

I desire now to comply with your holy institution of the sacrament of reconciliation. I desire to confess my sins with all sincerity to you and to your minister, and therefore I now call myself to a diligent examination of conscience.

1. BEFORE CONFESSION

a) Examine your conscience. Recall your sins. Calmly ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God’s commandment.

The First Commandment

Have I performed my duties towards God reluctantly or grudgingly?

Do I recite my usual prayers?

Did I receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin or without the necessary preparation? Did I miss the one-hour Eucharistic fast?

Did I fail to mention some grave sin in my previous confessions?

Did I seriously believe in superstition or engage in superstitious practices (fortune-telling, horoscope, faith-healing, etc.)?

Did I seriously doubt in matters of Faith?

Did I put my Faith in danger by reading books, pamphlets, or magazines which contain errors or are contrary to Catholic faith and morals?

Did I endanger my Faith by joining or attending meetings and activities of organisations contrary to the Catholic faith (Protestant services, non-Catholic prayer meetings, the Communist Party, Free-masonry, “weird” cults and other religions)?

Have I committed the sin of sacrilege (profanation of a sacred person, place or thing)?

The Second Commandment

Do I try my best to fulfil the promises and resolutions which I make to God?

Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I make use of God's name mockingly, jokingly, angrily or in any other irreverent manner?

Did I make use of the Blessed Virgin Mary's name or the saints' names mockingly, jokingly, angrily or in any other irreverent manner?

Have I been a sponsor (padrino, ninong) in baptisms and ceremonies outside the Catholic Church?

Did I tell a lie under oath?

Did I break (private or public) vows?

The Third Commandment

Did I miss Mass on Sundays or Holydays of obligation?

Did I allow myself to be distracted during Mass, by not paying attention, looking around out of curiosity, etc.?

Have I arrived at Mass so late without sufficient reason that I failed to fulfil the Sunday obligation?

Did I misbehave or have an improper posture or dress in church, or caused others to get distracted?

Do I generously help the Church in her necessities to the extent that I am able?

Do I fast and abstain on the days prescribed by the Church?

Have I done or commanded servile work (manual labour in which the body has more participation than the mind) on Sundays or Holydays of obligation?

The Fourth Commandment

(For Parents) Have I neglected to teach my children their prayers, send them to church and give them a Christian education?

Have I given them bad example?

Did I neglect to watch over my children: the companions they have, the books they read, movies and TV shows they watch?

Have I seen to it that my children made their First Confession and First Communion at around the age of seven?

(For Children) Have I been disobedient or disrespectful towards my parents?

Have I neglected to help my parents in their needs?

Did I treat my parents with little affection or respect?

Do I feel hurt and react proudly when I am corrected by them?

Do I have a disordered desire for independence?

Do I do my house chores?

Do I quarrel with my brothers and sisters?

The Fifth Commandment

Did I easily get angry or lose my temper?

Was I envious or jealous of others?

Did I injure or take the life of anyone? Was I ever reckless in driving?

Was I an occasion for others to sin with my conversations, "green" jokes, way of dressing, invitations to attend certain shows, lending harmful books or magazines, helping them to steal, etc.? did I try to repair the scandal done?

How many persons did I lead to sin? What sins?

Did I neglect my health? Did I ever attempt to take my life?

Have I mutilated myself or another?

Did I get drunk or take prohibited drugs (marijuana, heroin, upper, “downers,” etc.)?

Did I eat or drink more than the sufficient amount, allowing myself to get carried away by gluttony?

Did I participate in any form of physical violence (“rumbles,” “hazings,” fights, etc.)?

Did I consent or actively take part in direct sterilization (“ligation,” vasectomy, etc.)? Do I realize that this will have a permanent effect on my married life and that I will have to answer to God for its consequences?

Did I consent, recommend, advise, or actively take part in an abortion? Am I aware that the Church punishes those who procure and achieve abortion with excommunication?

Did I cause anyone harm with my words or actions?

When someone offends me, do I desire revenge, harbour enmity, hatred or ill-feelings?

Do I ask pardon whenever I offend anyone?

Do I insult or tease others?

The Sixth and Ninth Commandments

Did I entertain indecent thoughts?

Did I consent to evil desires against the virtue of purity, even though I may not have carried them out? Were there any circumstances which aggravated the sin: (the affinity with, or the married state or the consecration to God, of the person involved)?

Did I engage in impure conversations? Did I start them?

Did I look for fun in forms of entertainment which put me in proximate occasions of sin (some dances, immoral movies or shows, readings, bad company, plays, houses of ill repute, “beerhouses,” “sauna baths,” etc.)?

Do I realize that I may already be committing a sin by putting myself in these occasions (sharing a room with a person of the opposite sex, being alone with a person of the opposite sex in a car in dark places, etc.)?

Before going to a show or reading a book, do I try to find out its moral implications, so as not to put myself in immediate danger of sinning and in order to avoid getting my conscience distorted?

Did I entertain impure feelings?

Did I wishfully look at immodest pictures or cast immodest look upon myself or others?

Did I wilfully desire to commit such sin?

Did I lead others to sin of impurity or immodesty? What sin?

Did I commit impure acts? By myself through the practice of self-abuse (masturbation) which is a mortal sin? With someone else? How many times? With people of the same or opposite sex? Was there any circumstances of relationship, affinity, etc., which could have given the sin special gravity?

Do I have friendships which are habitual occasions of sin? Am I prepared to break off with them?

In courtship, is true love my fundamental reason for dealing with the other person? Do I live the constant and cheerful sacrifice of not putting the person I love in danger of sinning?

Do I degrade human love by confusing it with selfishness or pleasure?

Do I engage in acts that involve or lead to passion such as “petting,” “necking,” passionate kisses and prolonged embraces?

(For married people) Did I make improper use of marriage? Did I deprive my spouse of his (her) marital right? Did I betray conjugal fidelity in desire or in deed?

Did I make use of marriage only in those days when offspring will not be engendered?

Do I continue this method of controlling conception without grave reasons?

Did I take “pills” or other artificial means in order to prevent having children?

Did I suggest their use to other people?

Did I have a hand in contributing to the contraceptive atmosphere by my advice, jokes, attitudes, etc.?

(On abortion, sterilization, etc., see Fifth Commandment).

The Seventh and Tenth Commandments

Did I steal any object or amount of money? Did I give it back, or at least, have the intention to do so?

Have I done or caused damage to others' property?

Did I harm anyone by deception, fraud, or coercion in business contracts or transactions?

Did I spend beyond my means? Do I spend too much money unnecessarily due to whim, vanity or caprice?

Do I give alms according to my capacity?

Am I envious of my neighbour's goods?

Did I neglect to pay my debts?

Did I retain things found or stolen?

Did I desire to steal?

Am I diligent in my work and studies or do I give in to laziness or love of comfort?

Was I greedy? Do I have an excessively materialistic view of life?

The Eighth Commandment

Did I tell lies? Did I repair any damage which may have results as a consequence of this?

Have I unjustly accused others?

Did I sin by calumny, that is, telling derogatory lies about others?

Did I engage in gossip, back-biting or tale-telling?

Did I reveal secrets without due cause?

b) *Be truly sorry for your sins.* This is even more important than recalling your sins. This is not difficult if you remember that for *one mortal sin*, you could have been, now and forever, in the fire of hell, without any hope to attain anymore the eternal bliss and glory of *heaven*. You owe it to the mercy of God, your loving Father, who saw your misery and did not punish you at once but waited for your return. He receives you, embraces and kisses you again, and forgets all your ingratitude. He is the same heavenly Father who sent his Only Begotten Son, Jesus, to suffer and die for your sin. How could we help not to love him, and be truly sorry for our ingratitude? Be sorry for having lost by your sins the reward of heaven, and deserved the punishment of hell (imperfect Contrition); but above all, be

sorry for having offended your loving Father in heaven, and your merciful Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Crucified (Perfect Contrition).

c) *To be sure that your sorrow is true and genuine, resolve firmly in your heart* that you will prefer to die rather than sin. You need not promise that you will not fall again into sin. We know our great weakness and proneness to sin. Trusting in God, resolve now to try your best in the future to avoid sin. Sins and temptation may continue to attract us; but our will should be determined to detest and reject them.

This is all the preparation that is needed. Before a Crucifix, if possible, sincerely pray the Act of Contrition:

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offended you, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

APPENDIX N

Modern Preparation for Reconciliation

Am I prepared to answer the call to follow Jesus, and place my trust in him above all things?

Or do I place my trust in other “gods,” wealth, pleasure and excitement? Do I express my love of God each day in prayer and participate in Mass as often as possible?

Do I read the scriptures and try to get involved in parish life? Or do I provide excuses for not getting involved? Do I proclaim my faith or remain silent about the indifference of others? Do I work and pray for christian unity?

Do I really love my neighbour? Do I treat my marriage partner, friends, work colleagues, and others, with respect, with charity, with an appropriate tenderness and gentleness? Am I ready to forgive others, and to say “sorry” first, or do I bear grudges and harbour resentment? Am I a source of family tension or do I try to bring peace and harmony to the family home? Do I care for those in my family, especially the aged? Do I gossip and damage the character of others? Do I show care and compassion, do I search out those in need? Or do I think helping the poor is somebody else’s job? Do I use people in a selfish way? Am I a peacemaker or a peacebreaker?

Do I see everyone in the community as equal? Or do I look down upon those whose skin colour is different, who come from somewhere else, or believe something else? Do I ever express sorrow for religious persecution? Do I speak out against racist jokes and comments?

As an employer, do I pay decent wages, provide a safe and secure working environment, treat my workers as human beings, and acknowledge the role of trade unions? As a worker, do I do a full day’s work, fulfilling my obligations to my employer, treat my fellow-workers as human beings of equal dignity and value, and carry out my work in the light of my Christian faith? Through my trade union do I seek to redress any injustice? Am I mindful of injustice in the community and the world? Do I try to bring about justice? Have I done anything to call for the reduction of international debt? Ought I to act to help Third World countries develop? Have I contributed to the relief of refugees and victims of disaster? Do I strive and work for a just peace and pray for peace throughout the world?

Am I prepared for a new start with God, a new start at home, and a new start for the world’s poor?

(Reconciliation for the Millennium
from Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales,
Catholic Truth Society, London, 1999: pp. 45-47).

APPENDIX O

Seminar Series on

FAMILY AND FAMILY EDUCATION

**Theme: Family: Seedbed of Development
and Culture of Excellence**

**Institute for Family Education
School of Education
Centre for Research and Communication**

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THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT

All education naturally begins in the family. The attitudes, values, and dispositions of the adult citizen ultimately have their roots in the education he received in the home.

Given the proper orientation, both formative and informative, the family members can acquire certain human qualities that directly contribute to national solidarity and countrywide development, no matter how strongly adverse the environmental forces acting against it may be.

This two-day seminar is a modest contribution to family education, that is, the formation of parents and other family members to be potent agents of true social progress. It seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

1. to provide family educators and parent leaders with sound criteria on family and family life to enable them to carry out teaching, counselling and pastoral work on families and family members;
2. to direct participants towards a better understanding of the child in terms of development in the major aspects of the intellectual and moral life;
3. to foster in participants a learning attitude towards child discipline and guidance.

The seminar logo graphically presents the basic premise of the seminar series: that the family is the first and foremost school of wisdom and virtue. Each member in the family has an indispensable role to play in reaching the end of human perfection. Given the catalyzing effect that this seminar series is able to make, the family, thus enervated, becomes a formidable and cohesive force in human progress.

PROGRAMME

First Day

8:00 a.m.	Opening Session
8:30	Module 1 - <i>Foundations of Family Life</i>
10:00	Break
10:15	Resumption of Module 1
12:00 noon	Lunch Break
1:30 p.m.	Module 2 - <i>Cultivating Family Life</i>
3:00	Break
3:15	Resumption of Module 2
5:00	End of Day 1

Second Day

8:30 a.m.	Module 3 - <i>Educating Children in Love</i>
10:00	Break
10:15	Resumption of Module 3
12:00 noon	Lunch Break
1:15 p.m.	Module 4 - <i>Nurturing the Seed of Faith</i>
3:00	Break
3:15	Resumption of Module 4
5:00	End of Day 2

BRIEF ON ENTITIES

The INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY EDUCATION (IFE) is one of four institutes of the School of Education. Its mission is the promotion of family life and family education, and its major clientele are people and institutions involved in the formation of parents and in family protection and promotion. To realize its mission, the Institute currently has one masteral program, the Master of Arts in Development Education, two seminar Programs (i.e., on Family and Family Education and on Home-School Collaboration), and a diploma program, Diploma in Development Education. Launched in 1994, the institute has conducted a national research study on the Filipino family and is scheduled to undertake research modules in 1994 on various aspects of child education in the home.

The SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (SED) is one of ten constituent parts of the envisioned University of Asia and the Pacific and is currently one of two schools that have been formally established under the Center for Research and Communication (CRC). The School is primarily addressed to educators, whether parents, teachers, human resource development personnel, university professors, or community organizers. Apart from IFE, the School has three other institutes: the Institute for Development Education (IDE), the School's flagship, addressing teachers as professionals; the Institute for Master Teaching (IMT), addressing teachers as instructors, of specific disciplines; and the Institute for Home Management (IHM), addressing women engaged in the provision of household and institutional services. Established in September 1993, the school arose from the six-year efforts of IDE to service the country's broad education sector.

The CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION (CRC), a project of the Southeast Asian Science Foundation, Inc. (SEASFI), was put up in 1967 in order to help decision and policy-makers of government and the private sector make rationale strategies and plan towards the attainment of developmental goals. CRC now has two schools (i.e. the School of Education and the School of Economics) and is gearing itself towards conversion to the University of Asia and the Pacific (UAP), a multi-campus system that incorporates schools engaged in basic education and vocational-technical training.

APPENDIX P

*You are cordially invited
to attend a gathering with*

*Bishop Javier Echevarria
Prelate of Opus Dei*

*at 7.45 pm Wednesday 5th August 1998
in the Princes Ballroom
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Auckland*

Guests are requested to be seated by 7.30pm

APPENDIX Q

Further Sources of Information on Opus Dei

Opus Dei Information Office,
15 Vernon Street,
Strathfield, N.S.W.,
Australia.
Ph. 974 66379

The Regional Vicariate of Opus Dei,
9 Findlay Avenue,
Rosevale, Sydney,
Australia.
Ph. 941 13888

Catholic Enquiry Centre,
261 Maroubra Road,
Maroubra, Sydney,
Australia.
Ph. 934 91766

Curia of the Prelature,
Viale Bruno Buozzi 73, 00197,
Rome, Italy.
Ph. 0039 06 808 961

Greywood Study Centre,
120 Old Farm Road,
Hamilton, New Zealand.
Ph. 856 2734
greywood@xtra.co.nz

Catholic Enquiry Centre,
140 Austin Street,
Mount Victoria,
Wellington, New Zealand.
Ph. 385 8518

ODAN (Opus Dei Awareness Network)
P. O. Box 4333,
Pittsfield, MA 01202-4333, U.S.A.
odan@odan.org

University and other libraries, especially Catholic ones, may carry material on Opus Dei. Departments of Religious Studies and Theology may also have information.

Most parish priests and Catholic information officers would be happy to discuss issues with enquirers.

An Opus Dei newsletter is available from the prelature on request.

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