


Uncommo Faith

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THE EARLY YEARS OF OPUS DEI (1928–1943)



John F. Coverdale



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For Eileen, hope this explains
the inner workings of 'tree work.'
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UNCOMMON FAITH

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1928-1943

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JOHN F. COVERDALE

 Scepter

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Coverdale, John F., 1940–

Uncommon faith: the early years of Opus Dei, 1928–1943 / John F. Coverdale
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-889334-74-x (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Opus Dei (Society)—History—20th century. I. Title.

BX819.3.O68 C68 2002

267'.182—dc21

2002026682

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Revised edition

Published by Scepter Publishers, Inc.

Princeton, N.J. / New York

www.scepterpublishers.org

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DEDICATED TO
ANNE COVERDALE LUECKE

AND TO THE MEMORY OF
JOHN L. LUECKE

WITH GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

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Introduction

Opus Dei is a part of the Catholic Church. Technically, it is a personal prelature. Its aim is to promote among Catholics of all social classes a life fully consistent with their faith. It helps its members and other people to turn their work and the other activities that make up their day-to-day lives into occasions of loving God and serving their fellow men and women, reminding them that all the baptized are called to seek sanctity and spread the Gospel. Today it has about 80,000 faithful from ninety nations. About 3,000 are in the United States; 47,000 in Europe; 25,000 in Central and South America; 4,500 in Asia, the Pacific and Australia; and 1,500 in Africa. According to Vittorio Messori, the Italian journalist who collaborated with John Paul II on the best-selling book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, “Whatever the future of the Church . . . it seems safe to predict that Opus Dei will play a large role in it.”

This book recounts the early history of Opus Dei, when it was just a small seed beginning to sprout. I chose 1943 as the ending point of the early history. At that time Opus Dei had only a couple of hundred faithful, all of them single college students or relatively recent graduates living in Spain. Nevertheless, by 1943, Opus Dei’s founder, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, had a concept of all of its essential features and of how they would be fleshed out. Everything that has come later, and what has yet to come, is, therefore, a development of what was already in place by 1943.

Looking back after more than half a century, it would be easy to soften unconsciously the harshness of the early history by bathing it in the light of later developments. The principal obstacle to Opus Dei’s early development was the novelty of its message about personal dedication to the search for sanctity in daily life. Even today, despite the teaching of Vatican II about the universal call to sanctity and the development of a rich theology of the laity, many Catholics who have a clerical vision of the Church continue to find that message difficult to understand. More than thirty

years before the Second Vatican Council, the assertion that nurses, lawyers, factory workers, and farm laborers were called by God to seek sanctity in the midst of their occupations struck most people, including most priests, as heretical. Of the few who admitted the theoretical possibility of actively seeking sanctity in ordinary life, the vast majority considered it quixotic actually to dedicate oneself to doing so. "If I'm going to take my religion that seriously," they thought, "I may as well become a priest."

In addition to this intrinsic difficulty, *Opus Dei* faced a host of other hurdles. Its founder was a young priest with no money and no social contacts. He found it difficult to scrape together enough funds to support himself, his mother, his sister, and his younger brother even on a very modest scale, much less to finance *Opus Dei*'s activities. In addition, he did not belong to the diocese of Madrid, where *Opus Dei* was born, and, therefore, he faced a constant threat of being expelled from the diocese.

Shortly after the foundation of *Opus Dei*, Spain began to witness a series of legal attacks on the Church, as well as outbreaks of anticlerical violence. In this climate, most young men who were serious about their faith became so involved in political activities, and even in armed resistance to anticlerical violence, that they found it difficult or impossible to understand *Opus Dei*'s stress on the need for an interior life of prayer and sacrifice.

A few years later, when *Opus Dei* was beginning to have a small core of members and had acquired a building in which to conduct its activities, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War brought with it what may have been the most bloody persecution the Church has ever endured in Western Europe. Thousands of priests and many laymen were killed for their religious convictions. Churches were burned and religious services prohibited. The founder and most of the small number of members were forced to go into hiding. For three years, *Opus Dei*'s formative activities were obstructed by the war, in the course of which its only center was destroyed. Two members died during the conflict, and others did not persevere under the difficult conditions of the war.

No sooner had the civil war ended and *Opus Dei* begun to resume its activities than World War II broke out. Spain was not

directly involved in the war, but the climate of tension and uncertainty it created, coupled with a period of economic hardship and scarcity, presented new obstacles to Opus Dei's growth. More importantly, Opus Dei began to suffer a whole series of bitter attacks. Some came from enemies of the Church who resented Opus Dei's efforts to encourage Catholics to take their faith seriously; others came from members of the Falange, the dominant element in Franco's state party, who resented Opus Dei's defense of the political freedom of Catholics and its refusal to subscribe to Falangist political doctrine. The most important attacks, however, came from a number of priests and religious who viewed Opus Dei's message about the vocation of the laity as heretical and a threat to their efforts to win vocations for the priesthood and the religious life.

Despite all of these difficulties, Opus Dei not only survived but consolidated itself. Its survival and growth were not, however, foregone conclusions. They are due to the grace of God, but they also owe much to the extraordinary courage, fortitude, and faith of the founder and of his early followers, which this book documents.

* * *

The sources on which this book rests are fragmentary and uneven. On many events there is an abundance of material, on others very little, and on some none at all. For a number of reasons, including charity toward those who did not persevere in Opus Dei, the available sources focus almost exclusively on the people who stayed the course and contributed to Opus Dei's growth and development.

The text includes many quotations of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá. Some are taken from his written works, both published and unpublished. Others are taken from notes of things that he said on various occasions. In some cases I have used existing English versions, but in many cases where an English text was available I have used my own translation or have modified to a greater or lesser degree the previously published translation. For this reason, in the notes on sources of quotations I have referred to the

original Spanish even when an English translation has been published. I have rendered the quotations freely, striving to capture the meaning rather than the literal sense. One point about translation merits special reference. Like any Spaniard of his time, Escrivá used the term *cristiano* not only where a contemporary American would say “Christian” but also in some cases where we would say “Catholic.” I normally translate *cristiano* and *cristianos* as “Christian” and “Christians,” respectively, but sometimes as “Catholic” and “Catholics,” depending on the context. As used in this book, the term “Christians” always includes Catholics and frequently has strong reference particularly to Catholics. It is never used in this book to refer specifically to fundamentalist Protestants, as is often the case in contemporary American usage.

Given the character of this book, I did not wish to encumber it with the apparatus of scholarly references. I limited myself, therefore, to indicating in the endnotes the sources of quotations. This does not mean that I am not indebted to many other sources for information about the development of Opus Dei and about its Spanish background. Although I cannot acknowledge them all individually, I do wish to express my special gratitude to Professor Stanley G. Payne, who was my mentor at the University of Wisconsin and whose books I have drawn on freely.

* * *

I first heard about Opus Dei in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1957. Shortly thereafter I joined it. From 1960 to 1968 I studied in Opus Dei’s Roman College of the Holy Cross, where I had the opportunity to come to know and work with its founder, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1992 and will be canonized on October 6, 2002. Except for a brief Epilogue, the events recounted in this book all occurred long before I heard of Opus Dei. It is not, therefore, based on my direct observation. It is, nonetheless, naturally colored by my personal experience.

New York City, May 2002

The Foundation of Opus Dei

 OCTOBER 2, 1928

Tuesday, October 2, 1928, feast of the Guardian Angels, was the second day of a week-long retreat for diocesan priests being given in the house of the Vincentians in the outskirts of Madrid. The six priests attending the retreat had celebrated Mass, breakfasted, prayed part of the Breviary together, and read some passages from the New Testament. At 10:00 A.M., the twenty-six-year-old Fr. Escrivá went to his room.

Alone there, he immersed himself in reviewing notes he had brought to the retreat. These notes recorded a series of graces and inspirations God had conferred on him in answer to ten years of intense prayer, during which he had repeatedly made his own the response of the blind beggar who, when Christ asked what he wanted, responded: "Lord, that I may see." He knew that God wanted something specific from him, but the insights he had were so fragmentary and incomplete that he could not make out what it was. Later in his life, he would often describe the graces he had received before October 2, 1928, as only "inklings" of what God wanted of him.

As the sound of the bells of the Church of Our Lady of the Angels drifted through the window, pealing to celebrate the feast of the Guardian Angels, the missing elements were added, and the picture suddenly came into focus. Escrivá saw that God wanted there to be a portion of his Church made up of people who would dedicate themselves to incorporating into their own lives and to spreading to their friends, neighbors, and colleagues the joyous message that God calls everyone to sanctity, regardless of age, social condition, profession, or marital status.

A private note taken by Escrivá in 1930 records, in almost telegraphic fashion, a series of ideas that may summarize the content

of his October 2 vision: "Plain Catholics. The mass of dough being leavened and rising. Our thing is what is ordinary, with naturalness. The means: professional work. Everyone a saint!" A French author, François Gondrand, has given us a poetic version of the same ideas:

Thousands—millions—of souls, covering the whole face of the earth, raise their prayers to God. Generation upon generation of Christians, submerged in all the world's activities, offer God their work and the thousand-and-one concerns of their daily lives. Hour after hour of hard, conscientious work: an offering that rises up like precious incense from the four corners of the globe. . . . A multitude of people, rich and poor, young and old, from every country and of every race. . . . Millions and millions of souls spread out in time and space, covering the whole surface of the earth with their invisible influx. . . . Thousands—millions—of souls, like an unending peal of bells echoing toward heaven, the chimes mingling as they echo up and up.

We don't know whether Escrivá's vision was more like his terse 1930 note or like Gondrand's lyrical rendition or quite different from either of them. When Escrivá spoke or wrote in later years about the events of October 2, 1928, the references were invariably brief and sketchy. They often came down to the laconic statement: "I saw *Opus Dei*."

In his earliest surviving written account of the foundational event, dated October 2, 1931, Escrivá says, "I received the illumination about the entire Work." It involved a "clear general idea" of his mission, but did not include all the details. "God our Lord," Escrivá once commented, "treated me like a child. He didn't show me all the weight at once but led me forward bit by bit. You don't give a small child four things to do at the same time. You give him one, and then another, and when he has finished that, another. Have you seen a little boy playing with his father? The child has some colored blocks of different shapes and sizes. And his father tells him, 'Put this one here, and that one there, and the red one over there.' And at the end, a castle!"


* * *

This book tells the story of the building of that castle. Before turning to that story, it is necessary to see how Escrivá came to receive the foundational vision.



Spain.

The Founder's Youth

 1902-1925

Early Years

The future founder of Opus Dei was born on January 9, 1902, the son of José Escrivá, a thirty-three-year-old merchant, and his twenty-three-year-old wife, whose maiden name was Dolores Albás. I will refer to them in the Spanish fashion as Don José and Doña Dolores. They were married in 1898, and their first child, María del Carmen, whom they usually called Carmen, was born in 1899. His parents gave their second child four names: José, for his father; María, out of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; Julian, for the saint on whose feast day he was baptized; and Mariano, for his godfather. Starting around 1935, out of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Escrivá would join the first two names into one and refer to himself as Josemaría, but during his youth and the early years of his priesthood he called himself José María Escrivá.*

The Escrivá family made its home in the town of Barbastro in the Spanish region of Aragon, just south of the foothills of the Pyrenees, about fifty miles from the French border. Barbastro, with about 7,500 inhabitants, was a commercial center for the surrounding agricultural area. It had no large industry, and its family-owned businesses prospered or declined with the surrounding farms. The town had no real upper class. The most

* On more formal occasions, following the usual Spanish custom, he would use both his father's and his mother's last name, thus being José Escrivá y Albás. In 1940, the Escrivá family officially changed its name to Escrivá de Balaguer to indicate to what branch of the family it belonged. Because of this change, in the later years of his life, his full formal name was Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Albás.

prominent members of the middle class were engaged in commerce and small-scale industry.

Don José was a partner in a business that operated a retail fabric store and a small chocolate factory. His family lived in a comfortable apartment with balconies facing the town's main street and its principal square. As was customary for upper-middle-class families at the time, the Escrivás had a cook, a maid, a nanny, and a part-time houseboy.

The only outstanding event of Escrivá's infancy was a serious infection at two years of age. There were no antibiotics at the time, so infections often proved fatal. One afternoon the family doctor predicted the boy would not live through the night. Escrivá's mother prayed for him to the Blessed Virgin, promising to take him to the nearby shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad if he recovered. The next morning, when the doctor stopped by to ask when the child had died, he found him fully recovered and jumping up and down in his crib.

As his mother's reaction to her son's illness suggests, the Escrivás were devout Catholics in whose piety the Blessed Virgin played an important role. In addition to attending Sunday Mass, the Escrivás often said the rosary at home and, on Saturdays, went as a family to a nearby church for a brief service in honor of the Blessed Mother, in which the Hail Holy Queen was prayed. Their outlook was deeply colored by a faith that found natural expression in their daily lives. When young Escrivá showed signs of excessive shyness, for instance, his mother would say to him, "José María, you should be ashamed only to sin." The Escrivás were not the overly pious sort of people whose conversation was dominated by the latest ecclesiastical gossip and whom Spaniards refer to as *beatos*. Rather, they were, as Escrivá would recall in later life, "people who practiced and lived their faith."

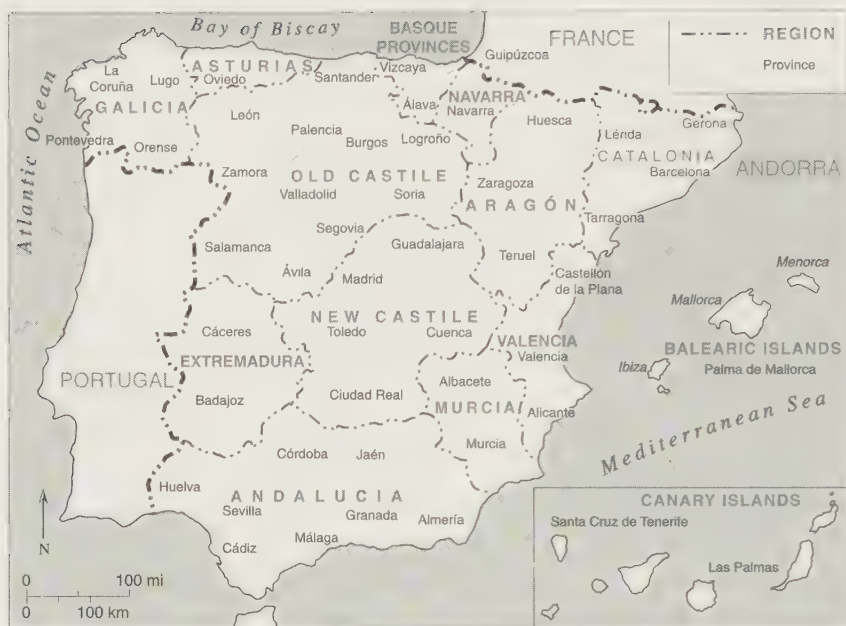
In his parents' home, young Escrivá learned short, simple prayers that he remembered and prayed throughout his life. For example, "I am yours; for you I was born. Jesus, what do you want of me?" Or "Angel Guardian, my sweet companion, do not leave me night or day. If you leave me, what will become of me? Angel Guardian, pray to God for me."

When he was six, his mother took him to her confessor for his first confession. In later life, Escrivá showed great love and appreciation for the sacrament of penance. He enjoyed recalling his first confession. When it was over, the priest, who apparently had a special liking for fried eggs, told the boy that for his penance he should ask his parents to give him a fried egg. When he returned home his mother, imagining that he had been told to recite a few Our Fathers or Hail Marys, asked him if he would like her to help him fulfill his penance. The little boy explained what his penance was and assured his mother that he would need no help in eating the egg. From then on, Escrivá went regularly to confession, and in later life he often said that far from finding confession traumatic, he had found in it a great source of peace.

Escrivá's early childhood was a happy one. The family was growing. María Asunción was born in 1905, María de los Dolores in 1907, and María del Rosario in 1909. Don José's business appeared to be prospering, and the family enjoyed a peaceful existence. Young Escrivá enjoyed an especially close relationship with his father. They frequently went for walks around the town, and his father had a way of taking seriously Escrivá's childish successes and failures, joys and sorrows. His parents, he would recall many years later, gave him a great deal of freedom, although they also kept a careful eye on him.

At school, Escrivá showed special interest in drawing and in literature. He soon began to cultivate a taste for the Spanish classics that would last his entire life. As a boy, he first read Cervantes in a profusely illustrated, multi-volume edition of *Don Quixote* that formed part of his parents' library.

The tranquil happiness of Escrivá's earliest years was soon broken. His youngest sister, María del Rosario, died in 1910 at nine months of age. Two years later, the five-year-old María de los Dolores also died. Their deaths saddened and troubled young Escrivá, who could not understand how a loving God could allow his younger sisters to die. One day, when his two remaining sisters and their friends were building a castle out of playing cards, Escrivá came into the room and swept the cards off the table. When they asked why he had done that, he replied that that was



Regions and provinces of Spain in the first half of the twentieth century.

the way God dealt with men. When they have almost finished building a castle, God comes along and knocks it down.

Escrivá's sorrow increased in 1913 when the next oldest sister, María Asunción, also fell sick. When he came home one afternoon and asked how his sister was doing, his mother told him, "She is well now. She is already in heaven." Despite the faith and confidence in God with which his parents accepted this new blow, in Escrivá's young mind the series of deaths left a deep impression. One day he told his mother that the next year it would be his turn to die. She tried to calm his fears, reminding him of how our Lady had saved him from death as an infant and of how she had taken him to the shrine of Torreciudad. She urged him not to worry but to put his trust in the Blessed Virgin's care.

The following year the Escrivá family suffered another heavy blow, the collapse of Don José's business. The years immediately preceding the First World War were difficult ones in the region of Aragon and in Barbastro. The agricultural economy, on which Barbastro's commerce depended, was failing, and the region lacked banks and other financial institutions to give businesses the credit they needed to ride out the downturn. Between 1907 and 1914, the number of fabric stores in Barbastro declined from eleven to five. In addition to the problems caused by the general slump, Don José's business faced difficulties arising from the obligation to make substantial payments to a former associate whom Don José and his partner had bought out. The situation was further aggravated by the former partner's failure to honor his noncompetition agreement and by the expenses of a lawsuit to enforce the agreement. During much of 1914, Don José struggled to keep the business afloat, cutting back on expenditures at home. The family let the nanny go and soon the rest of its domestic help as well. By late fall 1914, however, the business was bankrupt.

In addition to the business, the Escrivás owned the family home and other assets on which creditors had no legal claim. Those assets would have permitted the family to continue a comfortable upper-middle-class life despite the business failure. After considering the matter carefully, however, Don José decided that the honorable thing to do was to liquidate all his assets and pay the

creditors in full, although many people told him he had no moral obligation to do so. This decision put the family in a very difficult situation.

In a town as small as Barbastro, the prosperous middle class, to which the Escrivás belonged, probably comprised no more than fifty or a hundred families. The news of the Escrivás' financial ruin spread rapidly among them, particularly among young Escrivá's friends and classmates. Rumor had it that the family had become so poor that, in the classic Spanish phrase, "they were dying of hunger." One friend recalls that she was surprised to see young Escrivá having a ham sandwich — a highly prized item in Spain at the time — and she asked her mother why people said the family had nothing to eat. It is easy to imagine the taunts and jeers that Escrivá had to endure from his classmates. Later in life, he commented that the sting of their comments had taught him that children often lack heart, or head, or both.

Escrivá's classmates were joined in their criticism by a number of Doña Dolores's relatives, who disapproved of Don José's decision to pay his debts in full when the law did not require him to do so. Well-to-do family members refused to extend a helping hand to the family. Escrivá's priest uncle, Fr. Carlos Albás, was open and bitter in his criticism. "José is a fool," he said. "He could have maintained a decent economic position, and instead he plunged the family into misery."

Misery was an exaggeration, but certainly the family had fallen on hard times, and Barbastro was too small to offer much prospect of rebuilding its fortunes. Don José, therefore, began to look for work elsewhere, eventually finding a position as a clerk in a fabric store in Logroño, a town located about 130 miles west of Barbastro. He moved there in early 1915, leaving the family behind in Barbastro until the end of the school year. After spending the summer in the village of Fonz, where they had relatives, the Escrivás joined Don José in Logroño in fall 1915, when Escrivá was thirteen.

Logroño was a provincial capital with about 25,000 inhabitants. Although the town was flourishing, the Escrivás faced hard times, especially at the beginning of their stay. They lived in a

750-square-foot, fourth-floor, walk-up apartment with no heat. Because it was at the top of the building, directly under the roof, it was hot in summer and cold in winter. The family had almost no relatives in the city and knew few people.

In a society in which social class distinctions were sharply marked, the family's position in Logroño was very different from what it had been. In Barbastro, the Escrivás had clearly belonged to the prosperous, if not wealthy, upper middle class, but Don José had gone from a business owner to a salaried clerk at the orders of others. The Escrivás could no longer afford the amenities of middle-class life. They could not entertain in their accustomed style or take part in the events that had formed the framework of their social life in Barbastro. At a time when middle-class families all had servants, Doña Dolores and her daughter Carmen took care of the house without any outside help.

Like many families of the period who had fallen on hard times, they struggled to maintain what they could of a middle-class existence, but life was not easy for them. They retained an interest in literature and culture, but they could not share it with their new friends and acquaintances, who came from less-educated backgrounds. Don José and Doña Dolores did not complain, and the atmosphere in their home was pleasant and peaceful. Nonetheless, looking back on the family's years in Logroño, Escrivá described them as "very hard times."

He saw his family's difficulties as part of God's plan to prepare him for his role as founder of Opus Dei. In Logroño, he said, he learned to live Christian poverty with good humor and dignity. He recalled his father's advice to the family: "We have to act responsibly in everything, because we can't afford to spend what we don't have. But we should bear our poverty with dignity, even if it is humbling, without making it noticeable to people outside the family and without making it known." Toward the end of his life, Escrivá would say, "My father's business did not go at all well. And I thank God for that, because in that way I learned what poverty is. If not, I wouldn't have known."

From his father's patience and good humor in adversity, Escrivá learned lessons in fortitude and cheerfulness that would stand him

in good stead. "I don't recall ever seeing him frown," he said, referring to his father. "He was always serene, I recall, with a smile on his face. He died worn out, at only fifty-seven years of age. I owe him my vocation." "I saw my father," he recalled, "as the personification of Job. He suffered cheerfully, without showing his suffering. His courage was a lesson for me, because later I have so often felt the earth sinking beneath me and the sky coming down on me, as if I were to be crushed between two plates of iron."

Escrivá enrolled in the public high school in Logroño. Classes were held in the morning and the early afternoon, up to the time of the midday meal. In the early twentieth century, not many students attended high school, and the classes were demanding. Students who graduated from high school received a bachelor's degree, which may not have been equivalent to a modern American bachelor's degree but certainly represented a level of education superior to that currently given in American high schools. Exams were rigorous. For this reason, many students also attended a private school that gave supplementary classes in the same subjects taught in the public school. In the afternoons, Escrivá went to a school that does not appear to have had any particular religious character, despite being called St. Anthony's.

He did well in school, especially in literature. He read widely, for schoolwork and out of personal interest, especially the Spanish classics of the Middle Ages and the Golden Age. He also showed a lively interest in current events, following closely the battles of World War I and the Irish struggle for religious freedom.

By the time he reached his junior year in high school, Escrivá, who showed talent in drawing and mathematics, decided that he wanted to study architecture. Although he took religion seriously and prayed frequently, he showed no inclination to the priesthood or the religious life and protested at having to study Latin, which he considered something for priests and monks.

Vocation

A turning point in Escrivá's life came in December 1917 or January 1918. The winter had been especially severe, with heavy snow

and temperatures approaching zero degrees Fahrenheit. As he walked down the street early one snowy morning, he saw the footprints left by a discalced Carmelite friar. In itself, the incident was insignificant, but it made a deep impression on Escrivá. The love of God can move a man to go about barefoot in this weather, he thought. What about me? God used that seemingly trivial incident "to sow in my heart a burning seed of love," he said in a letter written many years later.

With the ardor and passion of his romantic teenage character, he resolved to respond to God's call wholeheartedly, without reservations. He drew from those footprints not only a desire for greater love of God but also a conviction that God was asking something special and specific of him, although he could not say what it was. Recalling the event only a few months before his death, he said: "I began to have intimations of Love, to realize that my heart was asking for something great, and that it was Love. I did not know what God wanted of me, but clearly he had chosen me for something specific. Whatever it was would come about in due course. . . . But I knew that I was of no use, and I made up a litany that reflects not false humility but self-knowledge: I am worth nothing; I have nothing; I can do nothing; I am nothing; I know nothing. . . ."

Escrivá began to receive Holy Communion daily, to pray more fervently, and to seek interior purification through frequent confession and penance. He went to the Carmelite priest whose footprints he had seen, Fr. José Miguel, for spiritual guidance. Escrivá had received advice from priests in confession, but this was the first time he sought spiritual guidance on a regular basis outside the confessional.

From then on, for the rest of his life, Escrivá looked for guidance in his personal spiritual life. He was convinced, as he would write in his 1939 book of points for meditation, *The Way*, that "one's own mind is a bad adviser, a poor pilot to steer the soul through the storms and tempests and among the reefs of the interior life. That is why it is the will of God that the command of the ship be entrusted to a master who, with his light and his knowledge, can guide us to a safe harbor." In keeping with a long-

standing tradition in the Church, he saw his spiritual directors not only as prudent advisers whose counsels should be weighed but as representatives of God to be obeyed. "A director. You need one. So that you can give yourself to God, and give yourself fully . . . , by obedience."

This attitude does not involve abdicating personal freedom and responsibility. Ultimately every soul is responsible before God. Certain decisions, like those involving vocation or choice of a spouse must be made by the individual himself, after weighing whatever advice he may have received. Thus when Fr. José Miguel suggested in spring 1918 that Escrivá join the Carmelites, he pondered this suggestion in the presence of God, but concluded that it was not what God wanted of him. Although he could not say positively what it was God wanted, he felt that the many restrictions involved in belonging to a religious order might well be incompatible with carrying out whatever it was God had in mind for him.

On the other hand, as he prayed about the matter, he concluded in April or May 1918 that God wanted him to become a priest. This conviction did not reflect a sudden change in his feelings about the priesthood. Although he respected and appreciated the value of the priesthood, he still did not feel any personal attraction to it. Rather, his decision to enter the seminary was a consequence of his conclusion that being a priest would facilitate his carrying out the as yet undefined "something" God had in mind for him.

Most Spanish diocesan priests worked in parishes, but a much larger percentage than in the United States served the Church in other settings, working as chaplains of schools and foundations of various sorts, as professors—primarily of religion but also of other subjects—as canons of cathedrals, and in a host of other positions. Escrivá would have been particularly aware of the variety of roles played by priests because a number of his relatives were canons of cathedrals. He probably had no clear idea of what his life as a priest would be like. He was convinced, however, that whatever shape his life might take, the point of his becoming a priest was not to follow a traditional ecclesiastical career but rather to be

prepared to carry out whatever it was that God had in mind for him.

In the Seminary of Logroño

On the strength of these intimations—or inklings, as he called them—in spring 1918, Escrivá decided to enter the seminary of the diocese of Logroño. His decision caught his family completely by surprise. His father had been counting on his only son to carry on the family name and perhaps to rebuild the family's fortune. The announcement brought tears to his eyes, and he advised him to think the matter over carefully. "Priests," he said, "have to be saints. It is very hard not to have a house of your own, not to have a home, not to have a love on this earth. Think about it a little more, but I will not oppose your decision." Escrivá was moved by his father's tears. He did not waver in his decision to enter the seminary, but he did ask God to send his parents another son to take his place. His prayer seemed unlikely to be answered since his parents' last child had been born nine years earlier, and his mother was thirty-nine and his father was forty-nine. Nonetheless, nine or ten months later, in February 1919, Escrivá's brother, Santiago, was born.

Escrivá graduated from high school in 1918 and spent much of the summer studying Latin, logic, metaphysics, and ethics in preparation for the seminary entrance exam. In the fall, he entered the seminary of Logroño as a day student.

The transition to seminary life was a rude shock. Although his family had fallen on hard times, he was accustomed to a refined and cultivated environment in which order, cleanliness, good manners, tact, and an interest in current events and culture combined with piety. The environment of the seminary was very different.

The seminary of Logroño was housed in a building that dated from 1559. At different times it had served as a barracks, a military hospital, and a prison. In 1918, an artillery brigade occupied the ground floor of the building, which also served as a stable for the horses and mules used to draw the artillery pieces. The upper



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floors, which the seminary used, were in a lamentable state of disrepair.

Few of Escrivá's fellow students came from families in which tact, refinement, and culture were highly prized. Young men from what Spaniards of the time would have called "good families," because of their economic or social position, rarely became diocesan priests. The relatively few middle- and upper-class boys who entered the priesthood usually joined a religious order. Approximately a third of the diocesan seminarians were children of landless farm laborers or industrial workers who, in the Spain of the beginning of the century, had almost no access to education or culture. The largest group was made up of children of peasants, self-employed craftsmen, and other workers who were also largely bereft of education. It was a rare seminarian whose family bought books or subscribed to a newspaper or magazine. Only about ten percent of the students in Spanish seminaries at the time came from families of professional men, and in Logroño the percentage was probably much smaller. This explains why Escrivá's former schoolmates looked down on him when they learned that he had decided to enter the seminary.

There is no specific information about the level of instruction and piety in the seminary of Logroño, which Escrivá entered in 1918, or in the seminary of Zaragoza, to which he transferred in 1920. A decade later, however, the papal nuncio in Spain painted a bleak picture of Spanish seminaries, which he described as "barracks or reformatories." "The clergy they produce," he added, "has forgotten about supernatural spirit and has turned its attention to bread and to their careers. The seminarians, who generally come from the most humble and even miserable sectors of the society, have received neither education nor formation and have lacked adequate encouragement and guidance."

These external difficulties were relatively minor. The principal battle was internal: Escrivá found himself, in his own words, "half blind, always waiting for the reason. Why am I becoming a priest? God wants something of me. But what is it?" In the face of these questions, he prayed more intensely. He would describe the situation later in an entry in his personal notes:

For years, from the beginnings of my vocation in Logroño, I had constantly on my lips the aspiration "*Domine, ut videam*" [Lord, that I may see]. I was convinced that God wanted me for something, but I didn't know what. . . . The phrase "Lord, that I may see" became deeply engraved on my mind the first time that I meditated on the passage of the Gospel of St. Mark about the blind man. In response to Jesus' question, "What do you want me to do for you?" he replied, "Rabbi, that I may see," and Jesus gave him his sight. Many people told me, as they had told the blind man, to be quiet. . . . But I said and wrote, without knowing why: "That I may see! Lord, that I may see." And other times: "Let it be. May I see, Lord, may I see. Let it be."

This attitude of complete availability to God characterized his entire life. We find it reflected in an entry in his personal notes from the early 1930s, where he writes: "I am your little donkey, Lord. . . . Do whatever you want, Child-God, with your donkey. Like a mischievous child of this earth, pull my ears. Give this donkey a good blow with the whip. Make him run as you want." As a Spanish theologian, Fr. José Luis Illanes, has observed, Escrivá learned this openness to God in the eleven years between the time he first glimpsed his vocation and the founding of Opus Dei in 1928. They were years "spent in expectation, awaiting the divine light that would reveal the meaning of the restlessness sown in his heart. He went forward in this way, faithful to a calling he sensed but of which he did not know the why or the wherefore. He persevered day by day, open to whatever God might want, even the most unexpected thing. He lived without being able to make plans or projects. All of this was a forge that purified his soul until finally it stood totally naked before God. The uncertainty in which our Lord kept Escrivá during long years brought him to an attitude of availability so profound that it ended up being the very substance of his personality." After Escrivá's death, Cardinal Marcelo Gonzalez, the archbishop of Toledo, explained the fruitfulness of Escrivá's life in terms of this "letting himself be led," in having a heart that was "poor, not settled in, detached, open to

everything, saturated with confidence in God in the midst of the greatest trials.”

While attending the seminary in Logroño, Escrivá continued to live at home with his family. As a day student, he enjoyed considerably more freedom than the students who lived in the seminary. Day students were not obliged to take part in all of the seminary activities. On Sundays, for example, the students living in the seminary taught catechism to local children, while day students were free to spend the day with their families. Escrivá, however, helped with the classes. This is the first time we hear of his teaching catechism, but it became a regular activity.

Zaragoza

Escrivá's father encouraged him to combine his priestly studies with a law degree. We do not know why. Perhaps he foresaw the possibility that the eldest son would at some point have to contribute to the support of the family. Whatever the reasons, Escrivá agreed that this would be a good idea. It was not possible, however, to study law in Logroño or in Calahorra, where the seminarians of the diocese of Logroño normally completed their studies. The nearest law school was in Zaragoza, located fifty miles southeast of Logroño. In Zaragoza it would also be possible to obtain a doctorate in theology, something he could not have done in Logroño or Calahorra. Escrivá, therefore, requested and received permission to transfer to Zaragoza to study to become a priest of that diocese.

Zaragoza, with a population of about 150,000, was one of the largest and most important provincial capitals in Spain. It had a government-run university with a school of law, a pontifical university, and two seminaries. After World War I, political violence was rampant in the city, which witnessed Anarchist uprisings and numerous shootings. Between 1917 and 1923, political violence claimed twenty-three lives in Zaragoza. It reached such a level that, at one point, the government declared a state of war and suspended civil liberties in the city.

In fall 1920, Escrivá enrolled in the Seminary of St. Charles.

The seminarians lived there and received their spiritual formation there, but they took their theology classes in the nearby Pontifical University. This was the first time Escrivá had lived in a seminary. Like his classmates, he had a small, sparsely furnished room that had no closet, dresser, or electric light. There were no showers or bathtubs anywhere in the seminary. Each seminarian had in his room a wash basin and a pitcher that he could fill at the cold water faucet at the end of the hall. The majority were content to wash their hands and face, especially since there was no heat in the building, even in the middle of winter. They were surprised at Escrivá's repeated trips to the faucet to get enough water to be able to wash from head to foot. Some considered him excessively fastidious and remarked that such attention to personal cleanliness was not fitting for a priest. On one occasion, a particularly boorish seminarian, who stank of stale sweat, deliberately rubbed his sweat-soaked sleeve in Escrivá's face saying, "A man should smell like a man." The naturally hot-tempered Escrivá controlled himself with difficulty and limited himself to responding, "Filthiness doesn't make you more of a man."

It was not only Escrivá's cleanliness that caused some of his classmates to term him sarcastically "the fancy little gentleman." One of his fellow students later recalled: "Josemaría was a gentleman, and it showed in everything he did: the way he greeted people and dealt with them, how he dressed, and his table manners. Although he didn't try to stand out, his behavior contrasted sharply with the prevailing customs."

Escrivá's personal piety also stood out. The daily schedule of the seminary included Mass, meditation, the rosary, reading a spiritual book, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and an examination of conscience. Even the more pious seminarians normally contented themselves with trying to carry out, with attention and devotion, these numerous acts of piety. Escrivá, on the other hand, frequently went to the seminary church to pray during free periods. There, in front of the Blessed Sacrament, he poured out his heart to God, often for hours at a time and occasionally during the entire night, adoring Christ in the Eucharist and imploring him for light to see what he wanted of him and grace to carry it

out. He also made a habit of daily visits to the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar to pray to the Blessed Virgin. The basilica dominates the main square of Zaragoza. According to tradition, the small pillar on which the statute of our Lady stands is the pillar on top of which the Virgin Mary appeared to the apostle St. James, in the first century, to encourage him in his apparently fruitless efforts to evangelize Spain. On one occasion, Escrivá obtained permission to remain in the church after it was closed to pray at greater length and to kiss the statute of our Lady, something forbidden to everyone but children when the church was open. In his room in the seminary, he had a cheap plaster reproduction of Our Lady of the Pillar. Using a nail, he scratched into the bottom of the statute the phrase that so often formed part of his prayer, "*Domina, ut sit!*" (My Lady, let it be!).

In Zaragoza, the devotion to Mary that Escrivá had learned as a child from his parents grew deeper and more ardent. Over and over again, he turned to her for help and asked her to bring him closer to Jesus. "To Jesus we always go, and to him we always 'return' through Mary," he wrote in the early 1930s, reflecting his own experience.

He tried to be discreet about his piety, but it soon became known. One might have expected piety to be admired in a seminary, but among some of Escrivá's fellow students it earned him only scorn and the nicknames "Mystical Rose" and "the Dreamer."

Due in part to the attitude of his fellow students toward Escrivá, the rector of the seminary was initially far from enthusiastic about him. In an evaluation at the end of his first year, he gave him a "good" for piety but only an "all right" for diligence and discipline, despite the fact that Escrivá had earned excellent grades and had been one of the few students who did not receive any punishments during the year. He described Escrivá's character as "changeable and haughty, but good-mannered and polite." More significantly, under the heading "vocation," he wrote a grudging "seems to have one." From Escrivá's later reminiscences, we know that at some point, relatively early in his time in the seminary, the rector even attempted to dissuade him from continuing to the priesthood. At the beginning of his second year, the rector went to

the trouble of requesting a report from the rector of the Logroño seminary on Escrivá's vocation and personal qualities. The favorable report he received back, combined with further contact with the seminarian, eventually changed his opinion, and he became one of Escrivá's warmest defenders.

At some point during his studies in Zaragoza, Escrivá suffered a severe trial. Addressing Christ in his personal notes in the early 1930s, he asks, "What would have become of me if you had not called me?" He answers: "If you had not prevented my leaving the seminary of Zaragoza when I believed I had taken the wrong way, perhaps I would be raising a ruckus in the Parliament as some of my fellow university students are doing . . . , and I wouldn't be on your side, precisely because there was a moment in which I felt profoundly anticlerical, despite the fact that I love my brother priests so much."

Although the trial may have been exacerbated by Escrivá's difficulty in adapting to the seminary and to some of the other seminarians, his note suggests that its root lay elsewhere, in what he describes as his "anticlericalism." In the Spain of the 1920s, anticlerical politicians were determined to eliminate the Church's influence on daily life. They wanted to reduce religion to a private, personal matter and to erase all traces of it from public life. Escrivá's anticlericalism was something different. It was rooted in a conviction that a priest is called to a passionate love of God and a life of selfless service to others as "another Christ, Christ himself." In this conception, there was no room for the priest to involve himself in politics or in petty efforts to control the faithful and use them to further his own goals. In later years, Escrivá would have nothing but praise for his fellow seminarians, the vast majority of whom would serve their parishes well and many of whom died as martyrs during the Spanish Civil War. During his early years in the seminary, however, he was repelled by the opinion of many seminarians that being a priest was a way to earn a living and get ahead in life. Their idea of an "ecclesiastical career," and their belief that the priesthood was for those who didn't have a more promising outlet in life, made him ask himself whether he had been mistaken in thinking that the priesthood

would satisfy the desire for love that had filled his heart since seeing the friar's footprints in the snow.

Escrivá's notes do not explain how long the crisis lasted nor how he overcame it. He must have found the answer to his doubts and longings in prayer, pondering in God's presence passages of the Old and New Testaments and talking with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph about the events of their lives and of his. A point in Escrivá's book *The Way* reflects this personal style of prayer: "To pray is to talk with God. But about what?" About what? About him, about yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, noble ambitions, daily worries, weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions —and love and reparation. In a word: to get to know him and to get to know yourself: 'to get acquainted!'"

His prayer was an intimate, personal, even passionate conversation. He would say to Jesus, "Lord, I would like to be truly yours. I would like my thoughts, my works, my entire life to be yours. But as you can see, my poor human misery has made me go off in one direction and then another so often. . . . I would have liked to have been yours from the first moment of my existence, from the first beat of my heart, from the first moment in which my reason began to stir. I am not worthy to be your brother, your son, and your love; and without your help, I never will be. But you are really my brother and my love, and I am also your son."

At times, he found it difficult to pray. Then he applied to himself the advice he was later to give to others in *The Way*: "'And in my meditation a fire shall flame out.' That is why you go to pray—to become a bonfire, a living flame giving heat and light. So, when you are not able to go on, when you feel that your fire is dying out, if you cannot throw on it sweet-smelling logs, throw on the branches and twigs of short vocal prayers and aspirations, to keep the bonfire burning."

At other times, God took the initiative and swept him up to the heights of mystical prayer. We know very little about these experiences because Escrivá burnt the notebook in which he had recorded them, apparently out of fear that anyone reading about the extraordinary graces he had received in prayer would

conclude that he was a saint –whereas he considered himself a “sinner who is madly in love with Jesus Christ.” Alvaro del Portillo, an early member of Opus Dei who soon became Escrivá’s closest confidant and would eventually become his first successor as the head of Opus Dei, said of Escrivá’s years in Zaragoza, “God helped him with many motions, with many locutions [in which] our Lord speaks, without the noise of words, and his phrases are engraved in the soul as if by fire.” Escrivá himself commented on the graces he received during his years in Zaragoza: “Not knowing what to call them, I called them ‘operative graces,’ because they helped me to work without any effort on my part, even though I was going against the grain.” After studying all the available evidence, the Dominican priest charged by the Holy See with overseeing Escrivá’s cause of beatification, summarized his conclusions: “Our Lord led him through mystical experiences that brought him to the peak of [what authors writing about mysticism call] transforming union: interior locutions [words heard from God in prayer], purifications, and consolations that made him ‘feel,’ in all his humility, the impetuous action of grace. He, like all true mystics, accompanied all this with a rigorous ascetical struggle.”

Prefect of the Seminary

In San Carlos seminary, two prefects, drawn from among the seminarians, were charged with seeing that the students observed the detailed rules of the seminary. One was normally a deacon and the other a seminarian who had received at least some of the minor orders. Their position as students charged with maintaining discipline among their fellow students was not easy. During the summer of 1922, Juan Soldevila, the cardinal archbishop of Zaragoza, decided to make Escrivá a prefect.

The appointment put Escrivá in a peculiar situation. He was only twenty years old and still dressed as a layman, since he had not received any of the minor orders or the tonsure, which marks the entry into the clerical state. The cardinal partially remedied these problems by conferring the tonsure on him in a private cer-

emony on the first day of the academic year, simultaneously naming him First Prefect.

Escrivá took seriously his new responsibilities as prefect, but without being overbearing. On his desk he put a piece of red cardboard on which was written in gold letters the first words of St. Paul's hymn to charity, "Charity bears all things."

Not content with maintaining external discipline, Escrivá worked hard at helping the other seminarians show greater charity to one another and greater piety in their dealings with God and the Blessed Virgin. He introduced, for example, the custom of going to the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar on Saturday afternoons as a way of honoring the Blessed Mother.

During the two years he was prefect, Escrivá felt that the seminarians acquired greater charity in their dealings with God and with each other. He was not alone in thinking that things were improving. According to his successor as prefect, the rector had such confidence in him that he "practically left the seminary in his hands." Years later the rector would recall Escrivá as someone who "formed future priests."

Not everything went smoothly for Escrivá, however. One day Professor Ger, the priest who taught canon law, began his class with a story that had no apparent relationship to the subject of the class. In a small town, he said, there was a merchant who ground stick cinnamon into powder using a mill imported from Germany. Once, when the replacement mill stones he ordered from Germany took a long time to arrive, he was unable to use the mill for weeks. Finally, he went to a local stream and found a few stones of approximately the right size, but they were not smooth enough to grind cinnamon. He put them in the mill, without adding any cinnamon, and left the mill running. After several days of rubbing against each other, the pebbles were as smooth and round as the mill stones from Germany. After telling the story, Professor Ger paused for a moment and, looking at Escrivá, said, "That's how God treats those whom he loves. Do you understand me, Escrivá?"

Professor Ger was referring not only to the numerous little irritations of daily life that God uses to smooth out the rough spots in

our character but to a specific incident that had happened a short time earlier—a fistfight Escrivá had had with an older seminarian in the cathedral. According to the rector of the seminary, who was present at the time, the older seminarian provoked the fight with gross insults and was the first to throw a punch. Nonetheless, Escrivá had clearly lost his temper and was upset enough by the incident to seek advice about it in a letter to his former spiritual director in the seminary of Logroño.

This event and the smaller, everyday incidents of life in the seminary gave Escrivá many opportunities to learn to dominate his quick temper. He may have had his seminary years in mind when he wrote in *The Way*:

It is inevitable that you should feel the rub of other people's characters against your own. After all, you are not a gold coin that everyone likes.

Besides, without that friction produced by contact with others, how would you ever lose those corners, those edges and projections—the imperfections and defects—of your character, and acquire the smooth and regular finish, the firm flexibility of charity, of perfection?

If your character and the characters of those who live with you were soft and sweet like sponge-cake, you would never become a saint.

In addition, Escrivá's responsibilities as prefect helped him to mature and improve himself. The needs of the other seminarians prompted him to pray more intensely, and he learned valuable lessons in spiritual direction, in the exercise of authority, and in the art of governing. Above all, his effort to live the virtues he was encouraging others to live helped him to grow in charity and understanding.

Law Studies

In June 1923, Escrivá finished his fourth year of theology, thereby completing the requirements for the degree of *licenciado*

in theology from the Pontifical University of Zaragoza. Escrivá planned to go on to a doctorate in theology, but the fifth year of theology involved fewer classes than the previous years. This meant that if he could obtain permission from his bishop, Cardinal Soldevila, it would be possible for him to begin studying law at the University of Zaragoza at the same time as he continued his theological studies.

Only a small number of Spanish seminarians and priests attended secular universities at the time, and Church authorities were generally wary of universities they did not control. In 1918, the Vatican had warned that “long and sad experience” showed that they involved great dangers for priests. Cardinal Soldevila, nonetheless, gave Escrivá permission to enroll in law school.

In the 1920s, Spanish universities offered students two different tracks. “Official students” were required to attend classes on a regular basis. “Unofficial students” were free to attend classes if they wished, but they could take the exams without having attended any set number of classes. Escrivá enrolled as an unofficial student. The school year was not divided into semesters; classes were given uninterruptedly from October to June, with short holidays for Christmas and Easter. Final oral examinations for all subjects were given in early summer and again in the fall, before classes resumed for the next year. Students had the option of when to take their exams. Many would take two or three exams in the summer session and another two or three in fall.

During the summer of 1923, Escrivá studied two introductory law courses on his own, taking the exams in fall 1923. During the school year 1923–1924, in addition to the three courses that made up the curriculum of the fifth year of theology at the Pontifical University, he registered for seven courses at the University of Zaragoza Law School, passing some of the exams in summer and some in fall.

Canon law was part of the curriculum at the Pontifical University and the Law School. In view of the challenges he would later face in obtaining canonical approval for *Opus Dei*, Escrivá was fortunate to have distinguished professors of canon law—Elias Ger at the Pontifical University and Juan Moneva at the Law

School. Escrivá formed a close friendship with the brilliant, if somewhat eccentric, Professor Moneva, with whom he remained in contact until the professor's death. Escrivá also became good friends with the professor of Roman law, Fr. José Pou de Foxa, from whom he would seek personal advice repeatedly during his early years in Madrid.

Ordination

Escrivá was ordained a subdeacon in June 1924 and began preparing for his ordination as deacon, which would take place shortly before Christmas. On November 27 he received a telegram informing him that his father was gravely ill and asking him to come as quickly as possible to Logroño. In fact, his father had died suddenly that morning as he was preparing to leave for work. The tension that had characterized the Escrivás' relations with Doña Dolores' family since the bankruptcy of the family business and Don José's decision to use the family patrimony to pay off creditors manifested itself dramatically in the fact that none of the Albás relatives made the short trip to Logroño to attend the funeral.

The twenty-two-year-old seminarian suddenly found himself with the responsibility of supporting his mother, sister, and brother. Taking care of his family as a priest would be difficult, and their needs would have justified his decision not to go forward. It was true that he had taken a vow of celibacy when he was ordained a subdeacon, but under the circumstances it would not have been difficult to obtain a dispensation. Despite the years that had gone by since he had seen Friar José Miguel's footprints in the snow, Escrivá still had no clear idea of God's plan for him. Because he had decided to become a priest to be in a position to carry out whatever it was God wanted from him, he was in the dark about the ultimate reason for his priesthood. Nonetheless, he took the fact that he had already been ordained a subdeacon as a sign that God wanted him to go forward to the priesthood and would make it possible for him to take care of his family. On December 20, 1924, a few weeks before his twenty-third birthday, he was ordained a deacon.

In Spain in the 1920s, few urban parishes had rectories. Most priests lived with their families or as boarders with some other family. Escrivá foresaw, therefore, that as soon as he was ordained and had left the seminary he would need to find a place to live. He wanted to be near his family and, in any case, could not afford to maintain a home for them and another for himself. Assuming that his first assignment would be in Zaragoza, he rented a small apartment in the city, to which his family moved early in 1925.

This move of Doña Dolores and her children to Zaragoza upset some of her relatives, especially her brother, Fr. Carlos Albás, a prominent and well-connected priest in the diocese of Zaragoza. During Escrivá's years in the seminary, Fr. Albás had helped his nephew in various ways and had seen him socially despite disapproving of both his nephew's plan to pursue a law degree and his concept of the priesthood, which Fr. Albás considered impractical and unrealistic. Fr. Albás was not prepared, however, to have his poor relatives living in Zaragoza. Their poverty would, he felt, detract from his own social position. He advised the family to stay in Logroño and even offered, together with other relatives, to provide some financial support if they would do so.

Fr. Albás was not used to having his advice ignored, and the Escrivás' decision to come to Zaragoza angered him enormously. He cut off all relations with the Escrivás and decided to do all that he could to drive them out of the city. When Escrivá and his sister Carmen went to visit him shortly after the family arrived in Zaragoza, he met them at the door of his house and asked them, "What the devil have you come to do in Zaragoza, parade your poverty?"

During the months immediately following his father's death, Escrivá prepared for priestly ordination and exercised his ministry as a deacon. His faith in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist was so vivid and his love for Christ so passionate that his hands, and sometimes his entire body, trembled when he touched the Host. He never forgot those encounters with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament when he was a newly ordained deacon. In November 1970, as he washed his hands during Mass, they trembled at the thought that soon he would be touching the body of Christ. The

memory of his experiences almost half a century earlier came flooding back to him, and he prayed, "Lord, may I never grow used to being near you. Make me love you as I loved you that time when I trembled with faith and love as I touched you."

Escrivá was ordained on Saturday, March 28, 1925, in the church of the seminary by Auxiliary Bishop Diaz de Gómara. He celebrated his First Mass the following Monday in the Lady Chapel in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar. Because the family was still in mourning, Escrivá invited very few people to the Mass. Hardly any relatives were present. His two uncles who were priests, Fr. Carlos and Fr. Vicente Albás, were conspicuously absent. In addition to his mother, sister, brother, and the two priests who helped him celebrate Mass, the invited guests were the rector of the seminary, Fr. Lopez; Professor Moneva, with his wife and daughter; one of Escrivá's cousins, with his wife; two friends of his sister; and two other friends of the young priest, one a judge and the other a seminary employee. After the Mass, a few of the guests went to the family's apartment for a quiet lunch.

* * *

The young priest found himself in a peculiar situation. In a certain sense his entire life up to this point could be seen as a preparation for becoming a priest. He had no doubt that his vocation was to the priesthood, yet he was also convinced that God wanted something else of him, something that he could not define but that was the reason for his priesthood. That would be his situation for the next three and a half years, until October 2, 1928, when he received his specific vocation as founder of Opus Dei.

Years of Preparation

1925–1928

No Room in Zaragoza

In the 1920s, Zaragoza was a large diocese with no shortage of priests. Ordinarily a recently ordained priest's first assignment would be to a large parish in Zaragoza, where he could learn from experienced priests. Such an assignment would have permitted Escrivá to stay with his family and would have allowed him to tutor students as a way of supporting the family. On the day of his First Mass, however, Escrivá received an assignment to Perdiguera, an agricultural village with fewer than a thousand inhabitants, situated in one of the most backward regions of northern Spain. Perdiguera was just fifteen miles from Zaragoza, but it could be reached only via a mule-drawn mail coach, so Escrivá was cut off from his family. The village was so small that he had no opportunities for earning anything beyond the stipends he might receive for celebrating the sacraments.

The pastor had fallen ill and had left the parish, so Escrivá found himself alone in a village where he knew no one. Although the parish had a rectory, it was still full of the absent pastor's furniture and belongings; so Escrivá lodged with a local peasant family. The first task was to clean the church, which was filthy. Then, with the help of the sacristan and his son, he set out to meet his new parishioners. In the course of a few weeks, he visited almost all of the two hundred families that made up the parish, especially those in which someone was sick and confined to bed.

Despite the small number of people who attended, Escrivá sang Mass every day and officiated at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament every afternoon. On Thursdays he held a Holy Hour. Every

afternoon he spent hours in the confessional, reading his Breviary and waiting for someone to come to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. His hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and his refusal to spend afternoons playing cards with the leading citizens of the village soon led some to call him “the Mystic” or “the Mystical Rose,” as some of his fellow seminarians had done.

Escrivá organized catechism classes to prepare children for their First Holy Communion. One of the boys of the family with whom he was staying could not attend the classes because he spent the whole day herding the family’s goats. Escrivá gave him special classes in the evening. One day Escrivá asked him what he would do if he were rich. “What does it mean to be rich?” the boy asked. When Escrivá explained that to be rich was to have a lot of money, lots of clothes, fat cows, and goats with shiny coats, the boy’s eyes lit up, and he responded, “I’d have big dishes of wine soup!” Escrivá thought to himself, “That’s the voice of the Holy Spirit. All of this world’s ambitions, no matter how grand they may be, are in the final analysis nothing more than a bowl of soup.”

Escrivá spent a little less than two months in Perdiguera, returning to Zaragoza on May 18, 1925. On his return, however, he found that he had no new assignment. Despite his repeated requests for an assignment, the officials of the diocese simply ignored him. If Cardinal Soldevila, who had named him prefect of the seminary, had still been alive, Escrivá would have had no problem. The cardinal, however, had been assassinated, apparently by Anarchist gunmen as part of the political violence reigning in Zaragoza. Escrivá had no access to Soldevila’s successor, Bishop Domenech, and his uncles used their influence in the diocesan offices to keep him from receiving any assignment.

To help maintain the family, Escrivá began tutoring students, but this was hardly sufficient to support himself, much less his family. Finally in May 1925, he found a part-time position as a chaplain in the Jesuit Church of St. Peter Nolasco, popularly known as the Church of the Sacred Heart. This gave him plenty of opportunities to exercise his priestly ministry but did not solve his economic problem. The Jesuits paid him five pesetas a day,

which was about one-fourth of the average income of a middle-class family. Looked at another way, Escrivá's income did not even reach the pay of a workman at a time when a working-class family that was dependent on only one wage earner was in dire straits. Furthermore, his mother was afraid that he would once again be sent to a distant village. Arming herself with courage, she decided to request help from her brother, Fr. Carlos Albás. Fr. Albás not only refused to help but pushed her out the door. Evidently there was no future in Zaragoza for Escrivá.

During the first year of his priesthood, Escrivá dedicated himself wholeheartedly to personal prayer and to priestly tasks at the Church of the Sacred Heart: hearing confessions, celebrating Mass, and teaching catechism. To make ends meet, he tutored so many students that he once described himself as a "teaching galley slave." On top of all that, he devoted himself seriously to studying law. During the 1924-1925 school year, his father's death and his own ordination had left him with almost no time to study law, and he managed to take only one course. In the 1925-1926 year, however, he took eight courses, so that by the end of the fall exam session he had only one course left to complete his degree.

Although Escrivá continued to be an "unofficial" student who was not obliged to attend class, he spent a lot of time at the university. There his cultural interests and personal qualities, which had put off some seminarians, made him a popular student and even a leader. The fact that he was a priest and wore his cassock to class might have separated him from his fellow students, but his self-assurance, his open, communicative character, his sense of humor, and his optimism allowed him to make good friends among his classmates, some of whom were nonbelievers. He frequently met with other students to study and prepare outlines or simply to talk. He even managed to persuade some classmates to join him on Sunday mornings to teach catechism to children in a poor outlying neighborhood. A student wrote years later that, in Escrivá, his fellow students found a "'romantic' of Christ: someone in love with Christ, a man with complete faith in the Gospel." These qualities enabled him to form close personal friendships not

only with fellow students but also with professors many years older than he.

By fall 1926, Escrivá needed only one more course to complete his law degree. In October, he began teaching canon law and Roman law in a private academy, the Amado Institute, which helped recent law graduates prepare for civil service exams and offered review courses to students still in law school. In January 1927, he took his last remaining exam and received his law degree.

Escrivá still had no regular position in the diocese and had been turned down for several posts. By this time, his former Roman law professor, Fr. José Pou, who was well connected in the Zaragoza diocese and understood the ins and outs of clerical politics, was advising Escrivá that there was no room for him in Zaragoza and that he should move to Madrid.

Madrid

Escrivá made a trip to Madrid in fall 1926 to explore the possibility of pursuing a doctorate in law at the University of Madrid, the only school in Spain that offered the degree in the 1920s. His degree of *licenciado* in law from the University of Zaragoza was the normal credential of a practicing lawyer, but a doctorate was a prerequisite for a regular university teaching post, which would enable him to support his family. It would also be the complete fulfillment of his father's suggestion that he study law.

Two obstacles stood in the way of Escrivá's pursuing graduate studies in law. First, he could barely keep a roof over his family's head and provide them with food. Where was he going to get the money for graduate studies? Secondly, how was he to obtain permission to live in Madrid?

The impossibility of obtaining a regular assignment in Zaragoza suggested that the authorities of his own diocese would have no objection to his leaving Zaragoza, but that was not the problem. Madrid in the 1920s was a magnet for priests from all over Spain. The diocese had plenty of priests of its own, and Church authorities were determined to reduce the number of priests

from other dioceses living there. The Holy See had prohibited Spanish bishops from giving their priests permission to establish themselves in Madrid unless there was some extraordinary reason for their being there and they had received the approval of the archbishop of Madrid, permission that the archbishop rarely granted.

In March 1927, after several unsuccessful attempts to find a way to move to Madrid, Escrivá learned from a priest friend who belonged to the Claretians that the Church of San Miguel in Madrid was looking for a priest to say Mass at 5:50 every morning. In a society in which people ate supper at 10:30 or 11:00 and often went to bed after midnight, the church, which was run by Redemptorists, was not flooded with applicants. The advantage of the position, from Escrivá's point of view, was that because the church was under the jurisdiction of the papal nuncio, a priest did not need the permission of the archbishop of Madrid to work there. The only approvals needed were those of the nuncio and, in the case of a priest from outside Madrid, the bishop of the diocese to which the priest belonged. Permission of the nuncio was no problem. Escrivá explained to the archbishop of Zaragoza that he wanted to study to obtain a doctorate in law, but that he intended to spend the better part of his time in pastoral activities, since that was why he was a priest. The archbishop granted his permission on March 17, 1927. Escrivá began making final plans to move to Madrid. The rector of San Miguel urged him to come as soon as possible, because the church needed his services for the upcoming Holy Week.

Just as he was preparing to leave for Madrid, Escrivá was assigned by his bishop to a rural parish for Passion Week and Holy Week. He was tempted to ask to be excused from the assignment, for fear that a month's delay in reaching Madrid might lead the Church of San Miguel to look for someone else. At his mother's advice, however, he accepted the assignment and notified the rector of San Miguel that he would arrive right after Easter. Toward the end of his life, Escrivá recalled with joy his brief stay in Fombuena: "I have been in rural parishes twice. They sent me there to annoy me, but really I learned a lot there."

Escrivá saw the hand of God not only in his untimely assignment to Fombuena, but in the many apparently adverse circumstances of his life in Zaragoza. He still did not know what God was asking of him, and he continued to pray for light: "Lord, that I may see." God responded to his petition with many graces, including locutions that Escrivá wrote in his notebook and meditated on frequently. Although he did not know where God was leading him, he was convinced that divine providence was at work in his life. He saw his impending move to Madrid as part of God's plan to prepare him to carry out the mission, which he was discovering bit by bit in his prayer, but which still had not come into focus.

Escrivá arrived in Madrid, a city of a million inhabitants, in mid-April 1927. Having almost no contacts, he first stayed in modest lodgings but soon transferred to a residence for priests run by the Damas Apostolicas, a recently founded Spanish order.

Among the Sick and the Poor

Escrivá's duties at the Church of San Miguel, which were limited to saying Mass daily, were an inadequate outlet for his priestly zeal. A month or so after he moved to the priests' residence, the foundress of the Damas Apostolicas, Luz Rodriguez Casanova, asked him to serve as chaplain of the church connected with the Foundation for the Sick, opened by the community. Escrivá was happy to accept the offer. To say Mass, preach, or hear confessions outside of San Miguel, however, he needed the permission of the archbishop of Madrid. The foundress enjoyed excellent relations with Archbishop Eijo y Garay and so was able to obtain the requisite permission. The archbishop was so determined to reduce the number of priests from other dioceses in Madrid, however, that he granted it for only one year. Escrivá would have to seek repeated short-term renewals of his ecclesiastical faculties to celebrate the sacraments and to preach in Madrid, as well as renewals of his faculties from his own diocese of Zaragoza.

Escrivá's official duties as chaplain of the church of the Foundation of the Sick were limited to saying Mass and officiating at

other services in the church, but he soon began to help the Damas Apostolicas in other ways. The Foundation for the Sick, which the Damas had established, sought to remedy some of the deficiencies of the available health care. The government provided almost no medical insurance. There were a few public hospitals for the seriously ill, but they bore no resemblance to modern hospitals equipped with elaborate equipment and highly trained staffs. Instead they were warehouses for the indigent dying who had no place else to go. No one who could afford a private clinic would think of going to a public hospital; but only the more fortunate among the poor could even gain admittance to a hospital. Inadequate numbers of beds meant that the poor often simply suffered in their hovels. The Foundation ran an infirmary with twenty beds, as well as a walk-in clinic.

The Damas Apostolicas also ran approximately sixty schools for poor children in the slums and other working-class areas of Madrid. There 14,000 students received primary education and learned the rudiments of religion. Additionally, the Damas Apostolicas had established six chapels in the outskirts of Madrid, where poor immigrants from the provinces lived in destitution, often in makeshift shacks. However, none of these six chapels had a regular chaplain.

Escrivá soon found himself involved in many of these activities. He heard confessions, taught catechism, brought the sacraments to the sick in their homes, and helped prepare some four thousand children each year for their First Holy Communion.

From his contact with children, Escrivá drew lessons for his interior life. Considering the tasks God was asking him to carry out—which he still did not see at all clearly—he concluded that his strength had to come from knowing that he was destitute. Although he had “nothing and less than nothing,” through prayer everything would work out as God wanted it. The life of spiritual childhood, he said on one occasion, “entered my heart through dealing with children. I learned from their simplicity, their innocence, and their candor. Above all, I learned from contemplating the fact that they asked for the moon and had to be given it. I had to ask God for the moon. Yes, my God, the moon.”

The most demanding and exhausting part of Escrivá's work for the Foundation was visits to the sick in their homes to hear their confessions, to bring them Holy Communion, and to administer the anointing of the sick. The Damas Apostolicas were in touch with thousands of poor people and received numerous requests—sometimes from the person himself, and sometimes from a relative—for a priest to bring the sacraments to a sick person. At the time, the parish clergy brought Holy Communion only to the dying. The Damas Apostolicas obtained permission from the archbishop to have Communion brought to any sick person who asked for it, provided the parish clergy agreed.

Much of this burden fell on Escrivá, who traveled from one end of the city to another, usually on foot or by bus, to minister to the sick in shacks made of cardboard and discarded pieces of lumber. Thanks to his winning ways, but above all to his intense prayer and sacrifice, the young priest had a special gift for bringing people on their deathbeds, long separated from the Church, back to the sacraments. In his personal notes, for instance, he records one case:

I reached the sick man's house. With holy and apostolic shamelessness, I asked his wife to leave me alone with the poor man. "Father, those women from the Foundation for the Sick are a bunch of bossy pains in the neck," he told me. "Especially one of them. . . ." He referred to Pilar, who is a saint. "You're right," I told him, and then I kept quiet so he would continue talking. "She told me I should go to confession . . . , because I'm dying. I may die, but I won't go to confession." I said to him, "I haven't said anything about confession, but tell me, why don't you want to go to confession?" "When I was eighteen," he said literally, "I took a vow not to go to confession, and I've kept it." And the man, who was about fifty, told me that he had not gone to confession even when he got married. . . . After talking for some fifteen minutes, he went to confession with tears in his eyes.

One of the nuns who worked in the Foundation at the time recalled later: "When we had difficult cases, sick people who

didn't want to receive the sacraments, who were going to die without God's grace, we entrusted them to Don Josemaría. We knew they would be taken care of, and, in the majority of cases, Don Josemaría would win them over and open the gates of heaven for them. I don't recall a single case in which we failed to achieve what we were aiming for."

A few years before his death, Escrivá prayed out loud, recalling this phase of his life:

Hours and hours each day, going from one place to another on foot. Among poor people who tried to keep up appearances and poor people submerged in misery, who had absolutely nothing; among children with runny noses and covered with dirt, but children, and therefore souls that are pleasing to God. . . . I spent many hours doing that, and now my only regret is that I didn't do it more.

Escrivá's apostolic zeal was not limited to the poor and the sick. He was anxious to spread the fire of Christ to the whole world, including the members of several aristocratic families he had met. Christ's words, "I have to cast fire upon the earth, and would that it were already kindled" (Lk 12:49) often overflowed from his heart into song.

To spread the fire of Christ's love in the world. That was certainly part of what God had been asking of him since he was a teenager, and Escrivá continued to respond to that divine call with the words of the prophet Samuel, "Here I am, for you called me" (1 Sam 3:5). One of his notes sums up much of his prayer while in Madrid in 1927 and 1928: "*Fac, ut sit*" (Do it, let it be). In response to these ardent petitions, God frequently gave him insights and inspirations, sometimes in the form of words heard in his prayer. Escrivá took pains to write down these insights and inspirations, to meditate on them frequently, and to put them into practice. Nonetheless, they remained obscure and fragmentary, inklings of the still undefined "something" that God was asking of him.

The Cicuéndez Academy

The activities of the Foundation for the Sick provided an ample outlet for Escrivá's desires to exercise his priestly ministry and bring others closer to Christ. The stipend he received from the Foundation, however, was not sufficient to support his family at even a modest level. To make ends meet, Escrivá tutored a number of students, in addition to finding a teaching position in the Cicuéndez Academy, a private academy like the Amado Institute, where he had taught in Zaragoza. Law students who could not attend regular classes at the university and had registered as "unofficial" students made up a large part of the student body at the Cicuéndez Academy. Escrivá again taught canon law and Roman law.

One day another professor mentioned Escrivá's work at the Foundation of the Sick to some students. The word spread quickly among the students, who found it hard to believe that their cultured and refined professor, whose cassock was always spotlessly clean and well pressed, spent much of his time picking his way on foot around mud holes in the unpaved streets of the poorest areas of Madrid. The students placed bets on whether or not it was true, and on several occasions after class they followed their professor to areas of the city in which they had never dreamed of setting foot.

Not content with just helping them learn the law, Escrivá tried to befriend his students. His warm, outgoing personality and his interest in each of them won him the friendship of many. Frequently students would accompany him on his way home after class. The conversation went from subjects they had just covered in class to current events and family and personal concerns. As he did throughout his life, Escrivá wove into the conversation references to Christ, to the Blessed Virgin, and to the virtues needed to live as friends of Christ. He did so naturally, without preaching or adopting a pious tone. He could move easily from discussing current events to religious subjects because his conversations with Christ, his Mother, and the angels were deep and personal. They were as real to him and as much a part of his daily life as the

members of his family or the students. As a result of his conversations with the students, and of his prayer for them, some of them asked Escrivá to be their confessor or spiritual director.

In November 1927, Escrivá scraped together enough money from his stipend from the Foundation for the Sick, his salary from the Cicuéndez Academy, and his earnings from private tutoring to rent a small apartment for himself and his family on Fernando el Catolico Street, not far from the Foundation for the Sick. This would be the third time in fifteen years that the Escrivás had packed their belongings to begin life anew in a strange city. In a society in which roots ran deep and many people lived their entire lives in the place where they were born, these moves, each time to a larger city where they knew virtually no one, were painful experiences. Escrivá, however, had no real choice; he could not remain in Zaragoza and could not afford to rent two apartments, even if he and his family had wanted to be separated.

Escrivá saw his family's misfortunes as part of God's plan to purify him, to strengthen him, and to prepare him for his still-to-be-revealed mission. "Lord," he prayed, "I'm not a suitable instrument, but to make me one you always make those I love most suffer. For every time that you hit the nail, you hit the horseshoe a hundred times."

Looking back later on the years that preceded the foundation of Opus Dei, Escrivá described them with different metaphors, but always as a period of preparation. On one occasion, he said, "Out of that poor creature who would not let himself be shaped, God wanted to make the first stone of this new ark of the alliance to which people of many nations, races, and languages would come." On another, he would say, "I had to be ground as wheat is ground to make flour. That is why God struck me in what I loved most. Thank you, Lord!" On yet another, he said:


They were strokes of God's axe to prepare from this tree the beam that he would use, despite its resistance, to build his Work. And I, almost without realizing it, repeated, "Lord, that I may see! Let it be!" I didn't know what it was, but I kept moving on. I moved forward, without responding to God's

goodness, but waiting for what I would receive later: a collection of graces, one after the other, that I didn't know how to describe. I called them "operative" because they dominated my will in such a way that I hardly had to make an effort. I moved forward, without anything strange, working at only middling intensity.

* * *

The period of preparation came to an end with the foundation of Opus Dei on October 2, 1928. From then on, Escrivá would know what it was God was asking of him and would focus his attention on carrying it out. The rest of this book tells the story of those efforts.

First Steps

 1928–1930

Before describing Escrivá's first efforts to carry out Opus Dei, we will turn our attention briefly to the setting in which they took place and to the content of the October 2 vision.

Social and Economic Situation

As part of the Church, Opus Dei's concern is with the welfare of souls. It was born with a message for men and women of all nations down through the centuries. Nonetheless, like the Church, its development is affected by the specific settings in which it takes place. For the early years of Opus Dei, that was the troubled Spain of the first part of the twentieth century.

Spain made some economic and social progress during the early decades of the century. Between 1910 and 1930, employment in the industrial and service sectors of the economy doubled. Illiteracy declined nine percent between 1920 and 1930. Between 1923 and 1930, the total number of university students doubled, and the percentage of women university students rose from 4.8 percent in 1923 to 8.3 percent in 1927. Nonetheless, Spain remained a backward country in 1930. In terms of civic culture, literacy rates, and economic development, it was at the level of England in the 1850s or 1860s, or France in the 1870s or 1880s.

Social tensions were acute. In the countryside, many peasants barely eked out a living. In the south, a few landowners owned huge tracts of unproductive land, cultivated by hordes of landless laborers who were lucky if they found work during half the year. In some areas in the north, peasant landowners tried to make a living on tiny tracts of land that were insufficient to support them.

By the 1920s, the situation of the urban working class had

improved, but it was still very difficult. Workers were divided between the Anarchist union (the CNT), with about a million members, and the Socialist union (the UGT), with about another million. There were a few Catholic unions, but they were small. The government had little power and few economic resources with which to solve the country's problems, and the political parties of the Right considered that the government should restrict itself to keeping order. In the decade following the founding of Opus Dei, Anarchist and Socialist unions would often take matters into their own hands. In many cases, normal political processes were largely displaced by social movements.

Political Background

After a brief interlude of republican government during 1873 and 1874, known in Spanish history as the First Republic, the constitution of 1876 established a moderately liberal parliamentary monarchy. Elections were so corrupt, however, that the universal male suffrage established by the constitution made little difference. For decades the two major parties—Liberal and Conservative—alternated in power, not by defeating their rivals in honest elections, but because their leaders agreed that it was time for a change of government and rigged the elections to produce the desired result. Spain's defeat in the War of 1898 with the United States brought to the surface a widespread demand for in-depth reform of the country, or "regeneration," as it was called at the time. The political system proved unable to respond to that demand, and during the first two decades of the twentieth century it entered into a profound crisis.

Spain did not take part in World War I. Although the country benefited economically to some degree from the demand for its products produced by the war, the strains caused by the war contributed to the final collapse of the constitutional monarchy established in 1876. In 1923, General Primo de Rivera declared a state of war and demanded that King Alfonso XIII dismiss the government and turn over all powers to him. The general had no political background and few political plans other than a desire to resolve

the crisis of the moment. The dictatorship he established was unusually mild and at first had considerable popular support, even from the Socialist Party. Primo de Rivera developed harmonious relations with the Church hierarchy and provided financial assistance to Catholic schools. An important Catholic group, the National Association of Catholic Propagandists (ACNP), became the nucleus of the political party he formed during the later years of his rule. Spain made considerable economic progress under Primo de Rivera, due in part to the general economic boom in Europe. However, its social problems persisted. The political situation grew more complicated because the king's support of the dictatorship undermined the political legitimacy of the monarchy. By the time the country began to feel the effects of the great depression of 1928, the dictator had lost almost all popular support. He remained in power for a time, but he faced growing opposition both among the population at large and in the army. Finally, in January 1930, when the king asked him to resign to avoid a military coup, he quietly left for France. He was replaced by General Berenguer, who was among the more broad-minded of Spain's military leaders. General Berenguer, who had no political experience or skill, was ill equipped to lead a country that faced the difficult problem of finding a new political consensus. Opus Dei, therefore, was taking its first steps in this environment of external calm but of serious underlying social, economic, and political problems.

Foundational Charism

The key to understanding all of Opus Dei's history, but especially its first steps, lies in the content of the foundational vision. Before October 2, 1928, Escrivá had begun taking notes that he referred to as *Apuntes íntimos* (intimate notes, or personal notes). They are the best source for studying the spirit of Opus Dei. Unfortunately, however, sometime in 1932, Escrivá burnt the notebook containing the notes he had been reading when he received the foundational vision. At the same time, he destroyed the notes he took on October 2, 1928, and also those he took during the following year and a half.

The destruction of those papers, and Escrivá's reluctance to talk in detail about what happened on October 2, 1928, make it impossible to know for certain which aspects of his foundational task emerged clearly from the initial vision and which remained to be defined. Therefore, an analysis of that vision and its earliest development, which largely involved Escrivá's effort to apply the message he had received to his own life, has to be based on what he subsequently said and did.

In the most general terms, it is clear that he received a message about the universal call to sanctity and a mission to promote within the Church the institution he would eventually call *Opus Dei*. The message and the mission were two aspects of a single reality. The institution's goal would be to spread the message and to provide people with the help they would need to live it. *Opus Dei* would be made up of people who had received a vocation to incorporate the message into their personal lives and to spread it by their word and example.

The heart of the message was the understanding that Christ calls all his followers, not just a select few, to strive for holiness. Escrivá saw, not as a mere theoretical possibility but as a practical reality, that all men and women can and should aspire to love God with their whole heart, mind, and soul and to love their neighbor as themselves. In more technical terms, he grasped that God calls all the baptized to the fullness of holiness.

At the same time, Escrivá understood clearly that for the vast majority of Catholics the vocation to sanctity entails a call not to become a priest, monk, or nun but to sanctify themselves in the world, in the normal setting of their daily life. He saw that Christ has redeemed and sanctified all of creation and calls most men and women to put into practice the great commandments of love of God and love of neighbor in their work, family life, recreation, and other activities. Stockbrokers, factory workers, computer programmers, store clerks, students, and retirees are called to holiness, not despite having to live in the world, but precisely in and through the situations and activities that make up their daily lives. As Escrivá would write in *The Way*: "Your duty is to sanctify yourself. Yes, even you. Who thinks that this task is only for priests and

religious? To everyone, without exception, our Lord said: 'Be perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect.'"

Escrivá also understood in the light of the foundational vision that sanctity is not an individualistic pursuit but rather is intimately bound up with apostolate, i.e., with the effort to bring others closer to Christ. He saw every Catholic as being called to help others to get to know Christ, to love him, and to incorporate his doctrine into their lives. In this vision, the effort to help friends, relatives, and colleagues live a deeper, more authentic Christian life is not something foreign to daily work and the other activities of everyday life. Rather work, family life, and recreation are its setting and often provide the means for carrying it out. In Escrivá's words: "For a Christian, apostolate is . . . not something added onto his daily activities and his professional work from the outside. I have repeated it constantly, since the day that our Lord chose for the foundation of Opus Dei! We have to sanctify our ordinary work, we have to sanctify others through the exercise of the particular profession that is proper to each of us, in our own particular state in life."

At the time of Opus Dei's foundation, many Catholics were trying to find ways of making society more Christian. From Rome the pope was promoting Catholic Action. In Spain, many Catholics were working to develop Catholic Action and other groups aimed at promoting social and civic action inspired by Christian principles.

The message Escrivá received focused not on changing social structures but on encouraging Catholics to make a serious effort to achieve sanctity in their daily activities. As can be seen in what Escrivá wrote in *The Way*, the transformation of social structures and the development of a more just society are expected, welcome, and desired consequences, but the central point is the sanctification of individuals: "A secret, an open secret: these world crises are crises of saints. God wants a handful of men 'of his own' in every human activity. And then . . . *pax Christi in regno Christi*—the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ."

The October 2 vision required a group of people within the Church, starting with Escrivá himself, who would dedicate

themselves to incorporating the message into their own lives and helping others to do the same. They would constitute a part of the Church at the service of the message. The role of that part of the Church – which would come to be called Opus Dei – would be both to spread the message and to help people live it. As Pope John Paul II wrote: “From its beginnings, [Opus Dei] has in fact striven not only to *illuminate* with new lights the mission of the laity in the Church and in society, but also to *put it into practice*.”

As Escrivá saw it on October 2, 1928, Opus Dei was not to be a mere association to which people would dedicate part of their time and energies during a certain period of their lives. Rather, belonging to Opus Dei would involve a complete personal commitment in response to a specific divine vocation. In Escrivá’s words: “To dedicate oneself to God in Opus Dei does not mean choosing to do certain things, nor does it mean devoting some of our time to do good works, instead of doing other things. Opus Dei affects our whole life.” A vocation to Opus Dei involves “doing Opus Dei by being Opus Dei oneself,” so as to be able to tell “all souls with the example of [one’s] life and word that there is a universal call to Christian perfection and that it is possible to obtain it.”

The foundational grace Escrivá received on October 2, 1928, was intended for people of all walks of life, both married and single, and his earliest efforts to develop Opus Dei were directed to a wide range of people. Promptly, however, he concluded that if Opus Dei was to take root in all sectors of society, it first needed to develop a core of people who would be free to dedicate substantial amounts of time to its apostolic activities and who would have the educational background needed to give theological and spiritual formation to others. He soon began to focus his attention, therefore, on college students and recent graduates, to whom he presented the ideal of a life of apostolic celibacy in the midst of the world. It was from among these young men that the first faithful of Opus Dei came. For this reason, during the period on which this book focuses, the members of Opus Dei were all celibate, and a large majority had college degrees. Thanks to their dedication and efforts, in later years, Opus Dei would spread to much wider circles of society, so that today a large majority of its faithful are

married, and many are workers, clerks, and others who have no degrees.

Initial Obstacles

Escrivá may well have expected that the inspirations and lights he had received from God prior to October 2 would increase, showing him how to flesh out and to put into practice what he had just seen. In fact, however, the inspirations ceased with the vision of October 2, 1928, and did not resume until November 1929. Both in spreading the message of the universal call to sanctity and in developing Opus Dei, Escrivá faced two great obstacles: an utter lack of resources and the novelty of what he was trying to do.

Escrivá had at his disposal virtually no resources other than prayer. He was a recently ordained priest who had just arrived in Madrid. He knew few people in the city and held no position that would facilitate his work. He had no money. He would say in later years that at the beginning his only resources were his "twenty-six years of age, good humor, and the grace of God." Two points of *The Way* capture his situation and attitude:

True: financially you are a zero, in social standing another zero, and another in virtues, and another in talent.

But to the left of these zeros, stands Christ. And what an incalculable figure we get!

So you are a nobody. And others have done wonders, are still doing them, in organization, in publicity, in the press. And they have all the means, while you have none? Well then, just remember Ignatius.

Ignorant, among the doctors of Alcalá; penniless, among the students of Paris; persecuted, slandered. . . .

That is the way: to love and to believe and . . . to suffer! Your Love and your Faith and your Cross are the infallible means to give effect—eternal effect—to the longing for apostolate that you bear in your heart.

The novelty of Opus Dei's message was a far more serious obstacle than the lack of resources. It is true, as he would later say, that the message was "as old as the Gospel." Christ himself had challenged all of his followers to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5: 48), and St. Paul had told the first Christians at Thessalonica: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess 4: 3). At least since the publication of St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*, in the early seventeenth century, Catholic theology had recognized that, in theory, lay men and women can lead an intense spiritual life that will bring them to the fullness of the love of God and neighbor that is sanctity.

Yet the message was, in Escrivá's words, also "like the Gospel, always new." Few would have denied that it was theoretically possible for laymen to achieve sanctity, but fewer still proposed sanctity in the world as an achievable ideal. A more intense spiritual life in a young man or woman, or even a desire to serve God seriously, was normally taken as an unequivocal sign of a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life. Most priests never encouraged lay men and women to make a serious effort to achieve sanctity in their ordinary lives. This habitual failure to present the ideal of sanctity in all its fullness reflected a practical conviction that the best that could be hoped for from lay men and women was the fulfillment of their basic spiritual duties. Sanctity in the midst of the world might be an interesting topic for theological speculation, but it was rarely preached about and even less frequently actively pursued.

Two priests who knew Escrivá in the early years of Opus Dei, both of whom later became bishops, testify to the novelty of his message. Fr. Laureano Castán Lacoma recalls that, in the early decades of the twentieth century, "people spoke little about the universal call to sanctity." Even among those who had studied theology, the topic was virtually unknown. Fr. Pedro Cantero Cuadrado, the future archbishop of Zaragoza, says that his conversations with Escrivá in 1930 and 1931 were "naturally, the first time I heard about sanctification in ordinary work." If the idea of complete personal dedication to sanctity in the middle

of the world through the sanctification of work was foreign to priests, it was even more unknown among lay people.

It was therefore difficult for people to understand Escrivá when he said: "Sanctity is not only for a privileged few." "Our Lord calls all of us, and he expects Love from all of us. From all of us, wherever we may be. From all of us, whatever our state in life, our profession or job. Because ordinary daily life, that has no special luster, can be a means of sanctity." Although the words were plain and easily comprehensible, people who heard Escrivá talk about a serious commitment to sanctity and apostolate instinctively thought about becoming a priest or joining a religious order. They could hardly believe that he was suggesting they make such a commitment without leaving behind their jobs or professions and the rest of their daily lives.

Building on Prayer and Sacrifice

Escrivá understood that in a spiritual undertaking, the order had to be "First, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place, very much 'in the third place,' action." His primary concern was to redouble his own prayer and penance and to seek the prayers and sacrifices of others. Only a few months before his death, he said: "What can a child who has to carry out a mission do if he is too young, has no means, money, knowledge, virtue, or anything else? He can go to his father and mother. He can have recourse to those who can do something. He can ask his friends for help. . . . That is what I did in the spiritual life."

Escrivá was convinced that "Next to the prayer of priests and of dedicated virgins, the prayer most pleasing to God is the prayer of children and that of the sick." He eagerly sought priests' prayers, even to the point of stopping them on the street to ask them to pray for his intentions. In his frequent visits to the sick and dying, he begged them to pray and to offer their sufferings for an intention of his.

On his way to say Mass each morning, he would pass a beggar woman who was always in the same spot, asking for alms. One day, he approached her and said, echoing St. Peter's words

recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, “My daughter, I cannot give you gold or silver. I, a poor priest of Jesus Christ, give you what I have: the blessing of God, the Father Almighty. And I ask you to pray a lot for an intention of mine that will give great glory to God and do great good to souls. Give God all that you can.” When he passed by a few days later, the woman was no longer in her spot. Sometime later, he found her in a hospital ward he was visiting. “My daughter,” he asked, “what are you doing here? What is wrong with you?” She simply looked at him and smiled. When he told her that the next day he would offer the Mass for her cure, she asked, “What sense does that make? You told me to pray for something that would give great glory to God and to give him everything I could. I offered him what I have, my life.” Escrivá limited himself to responding, “Do what you like, but I will pray to our Lord for you. If you go, be sure to fulfill very well my request.” Although she never joined Opus Dei, or even knew what it was, Escrivá considered her spiritually the first woman member. Years later he commented that “since that poor beggar woman went to heaven, the Work began to go forward more quickly.”

First Steps

The October 2 vision left Escrivá with no doubt that God wanted Opus Dei to exist. This did not, however, necessarily mean that he was called to found a new institution within the Church. It was possible he was called to work in something that already existed. Escrivá found this an attractive prospect. From the first inklings of what God was asking of him, he had felt “a desire to hide myself and disappear, to live [in a way that reflects the aspiration of St. John the Baptist, so that] ‘he must increase, and I must decrease’ (Jn 3:30). The glory of our Lord must grow, and I must not be seen.” In 1932, he would write to the members of Opus Dei:

You know what aversion I have always felt for some people’s determination to found new institutions when they are not based on very supernatural reasons which the Church approves. It seemed to me, and it still does, that there are more

than enough foundations and founders. I saw the danger of a sort of *fixation* on foundations that led to creating unnecessary entities for reasons I considered ridiculous. I thought, perhaps uncharitably, that in some cases the purpose of the entity wasn't what mattered. The question was to create something new and call oneself a founder.

Looking back on his reluctance to found something new, he said many years later:

Our Lord . . . seeing my resistance, and my work which was both enthusiastic and weak at the same time, gave me the apparent humility of thinking that there might be in the world things that were not different from what he was asking of me. It was an unreasonable cowardice. It was the cowardice of comfort, but at the same time the proof that I had no interest in being the founder of anything. . . . I was afraid of the cross that our Lord was placing on my shoulders.

The hope that what God was asking of him might already exist moved Escrivá to seek information about Catholic institutions in Spain and in other countries. Each time he learned about a new group, however, he concluded that it varied in some essential way from what God was asking of him.

Neither on October 2, 1928, nor in the days and months that followed, did Escrivá call a meeting of potential members, prepare statutes, issue a press statement, or publish an article explaining the goals of the new entity or his message of the universal call to sanctity in the world. He did not even call together his family, friends, and acquaintances to explain to them what he was about to do.

Rather, he began to work quietly, but tenaciously, to spread his ideal to people with whom he came into contact. His approach was eminently practical and pastoral and took the form of what he called "an apostolate of friendship and confidence," based on personal dealings and conversation. He started with the people he already knew through his teaching at the Cicuéndez Academy, his

work at the Foundation for the Sick, and through hearing confessions and giving spiritual direction.

He rarely spoke in abstract terms about the historical and cultural situation of the Church or about the theory of the laity in the Church. He presented the word of God, read in the light of the October 2 vision, as a vivifying force capable of transforming the lives of his listeners without taking them away from their work, their friends, and their social situations. He focused on helping each individual to come closer to God, to acquire virtues and an interior life of prayer and sacrifice, and to feel the responsibility of spreading Christ's message to friends, colleagues, and family members through word and example.

Escrivá did not look for sudden dramatic changes in the people he dealt with but for incremental improvements. His approach is reflected in his 1939 book, *The Way*. It leads its readers up a long, gradual slope to a point where they can finally understand God's invitation to become contemplative souls in the midst of the world. It starts with a call to give one's life meaning and direction: "Don't let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail." It speaks of character, self-dominion, and the desire for excellence. On these natural foundations, it gradually introduces the reader to prayer, spirit of sacrifice, love of God, apostolic commitment, divine filiation, spiritual childhood, and perseverance.

As the months went by, Escrivá gradually put together several small groups of people whom he was forming in the spirit of Opus Dei, without as yet explaining to them what Opus Dei would be. One group was comprised of university students and recent graduates, including some of his students from the Cicuéndez Academy, as well as José Romeo, the younger brother of one of Escrivá's fellow law students in Zaragoza. A second group was made up of priests. A third consisted of workmen and clerks whom Escrivá met at a talk he gave during a mission organized by the Foundation for the Sick in June 1930.

Escrivá tried to persuade all of these people to come to him for spiritual direction and began to look for possible members of Opus Dei among them. When he felt that a particular individual had reached a position in which he could understand, Escrivá

would explain to him the ideal of sanctity and apostolate in the midst of the world, through work done conscientiously for love of God. He did not talk about joining Opus Dei, but rather about being and doing God's work. One reason for this was that Opus Dei did not even have a name until the summer of 1930.

In 1967, Escrivá recalled: "I didn't speak of the Work at first to those at my side: I set them to work for God, and that was it. It's what our Lord did with the apostles. If you open the Gospel, you will see that at first Jesus did not speak to them of what he was going to do. He called them, they followed him, and he conversed privately with them or in groups, both large and small. . . . That's how I behaved with the first ones. I said to them, 'Come with me.'"

Because of the destruction of Escrivá's notes for the period prior to March 1930, it is impossible to give a detailed picture of his early efforts to develop Opus Dei. It is clear, however, that he suffered many disappointments. A number of university students and recent graduates became enthused about the ideals he proposed to them, but after a while they grew tired and drifted away, at times cutting off their contact with him without even saying goodbye. Fr. Norberto Rodriguez, an older priest in ill health, and Fr. Lino Veá-Murguía, a priest of about Escrivá's age who would be killed during the Spanish Civil War, responded affirmatively when they heard about the possibility of forming part of Opus Dei, but neither seems to have understood very well what it involved.

Women in Opus Dei

The vision of October 2, 1928, did not explicitly include women. During the next year and a half, Escrivá was convinced that an essential feature of what God was asking of him was that it involved only men. One clear sign of this conviction is found in Escrivá's search for an existing institution that God might want him to dedicate himself to rather than founding something new. In late 1929, he turned his attention to the Company of St. Paul, founded by Cardinal Ferrari. When he learned that it comprised both men and women, he immediately concluded that it could not be what God had asked of him.

On February 14, 1930, Escrivá went to say Mass in a private chapel. His personal notes record what happened during the Mass. “Immediately after Communion: the entire women’s branch of the Work! I cannot say that I *saw*, but yes I grasped *intellectually*, in detail, what the women’s branch of Opus Dei was to be. Later I added other elements, developing the *intellectual vision*.”

Like the events of October 2, 1928, the foundation of the women’s section of Opus Dei caught Escrivá by surprise. Escrivá saw in this a sign of God’s providence. “Our Lord manipulated me in such a way as to give an external objective proof that the Work is his. I said, ‘I don’t want women in Opus Dei.’ God said, ‘But I want them.’” The realization that Opus Dei was to be made up of both men and women put an end to Escrivá’s search for an existing organization. From then on, he had no doubt that he was called to found something new in the Church.

Zorzano

The first person to persevere in Opus Dei, Isidoro Zorzano, did not join until almost two years after its foundation. Zorzano was born in Argentina, but his parents had returned to Spain when he was three. He had been a high school classmate and friend of Escrivá’s in Logroño and had gone on to study civil engineering, one of the most prestigious and difficult degree programs offered by Spanish universities. After graduation, he worked briefly for a company that built railroad rolling stock. In December 1928, he began working for a railroad in Malaga, a city on the southeastern coast of Spain. In addition to his work for the railroad, Zorzano taught evening classes of mathematics and electricity in the trade school of Malaga.

Over the years Zorzano and Escrivá had run into each other a few times and had exchanged occasional letters, but they were not in close contact. Shortly after the foundation of Opus Dei, Escrivá began to pray more for Zorzano as someone who could understand the spirit of Opus Dei. In August 1930, he sent him a postcard inviting him to stop by to visit the next time he came to Madrid and promising to tell him “very interesting things.”

When he received Escrivá's note, Zorzano was in a spiritual crisis. Although his professional work was going well, he felt unsatisfied. He found himself thinking more and more frequently that he should give himself completely to God. In his mind, that could mean only one thing: to enter a religious order. On the other hand, he loved his profession and was not convinced that God wanted him to give it up. What he wanted to do was to harmonize his professional work with a complete dedication to God, but that seemed impossible.

On August 24, 1930, the feast of St. Bartholomew, Zorzano was in Madrid for professional reasons. Although he had not made an appointment, he hoped to meet Escrivá, both to find out about his friend's "very interesting things" and to see if Escrivá could help resolve his spiritual crisis. He went to the Foundation for the Sick but was told that Escrivá was not in. In fact, Escrivá was visiting José Romeo, who was ill in bed.

In a note written the next day, Escrivá records:

I felt uncomfortable, for no reason, and left earlier than would have been normal, without waiting for Manuel and Colo [the other members of the family] to return home. Shortly before reaching the Foundation, I met Zorzano on Nicasio Gallego Street. When they told him that I was not in, he had left the Foundation with the intention of going to the Plaza del Sol, but instead [of taking the direct route to the plaza, he] went back to Nicasio Gallego Street, driven, he said, by a certainty that he would meet me.

Escrivá would not usually have taken Nicasio Gallego Street on his way home, but that day he did; and the two met. They had barely said hello when Zorzano said point-blank to Escrivá, "I want to give myself to God, but I don't know how or where." They agreed to meet later in the day to talk more calmly.

In keeping with a long-standing tradition in the Church, Escrivá regularly sought help and guidance from a spiritual director. In July 1930, he had begun to consult Fr. Valentín Sánchez Ruiz, a Jesuit who was famous for his skill as a director of

souls. With Fr. Sánchez, as with other spiritual directors, he normally confined himself to questions of his own interior life, without seeking advice about the apostolates of Opus Dei. In this case, however, he made an exception and telephoned Fr. Sánchez to explain what had happened and to ask his opinion. Years later, Escrivá recalled, "When I asked him what he thought I should do, he responded, 'What should you do? Catch him!'"

Later that afternoon, after talking about Zorzano's concerns and aspirations, Escrivá explained that he had recently begun an undertaking whose goal was precisely sanctity in the midst of the world. Zorzano, he said, could dedicate himself fully to God, living apostolic celibacy, developing a deep spiritual life, and doing apostolate without leaving his job or his place in the world. Zorzano responded immediately that this was exactly what he had been searching for. That same evening, Zorzano left Madrid to visit his mother in the north of Spain and then to return to Malaga. A few days later he wrote to Escrivá:

I feel the need to be together and to orient myself definitively, with your help, in the new era that you opened before my eyes. What you showed me was precisely the ideal that I had forged for myself, but that I thought could not be carried out because it involved such disparate factors. I have thought about it, and each day it seems to me more beautiful. My only desire is to cooperate in carrying out that ideal so as to bring our cause to fulfillment.

Until 1936, Zorzano's professional work kept him in Malaga, so a large part of his initial formation as a member of Opus Dei was by letter, supplemented by occasional trips to Madrid. Despite his desires to serve God, Zorzano had not received much religious education and was not in the habit of spending much time praying. He normally received Holy Communion only on Sundays. When he went hiking with friends, they left Malaga right after breakfast and heard Mass in whatever small town formed the starting point of their hike. At the time, the Church

required those who received Holy Communion not to eat or drink anything from midnight the previous night; this meant that, even on many Sundays, Zorzano did not receive Holy Communion.

From the beginning, Escrivá urged Zorzano to build up little by little an intense interior life of prayer and sacrifice. In a letter dated November 23, 1930, he wrote: "Look. To be what our Lord wants and what we want, we have to build a solid foundation on prayer and expiation (sacrifice) before all else. Pray. Never, I repeat, never fail to do your meditation when you get up.* And offer each day, as expiation, all the disagreeable things and sacrifices of the day." Patiently, but insistently, Escrivá urged Zorzano to frequent the sacraments and especially to receive Holy Communion more frequently, daily if possible. He did not discourage Zorzano from participating in the activities of the various groups he had joined, but he tried gradually to help him see that he should give priority to genuine piety and a more personal apostolate at work with friends, colleagues, and relatives.

The Name Opus Dei

During close to two years, Escrivá had no proper name for the apostolic activity God had shown him on October 2, 1928. In the early months of 1930, he sometimes applied to it the Spanish phrase "obra de Dios" ("work of God"), but he used the phrase as a descriptive term rather than as a proper name and without special reference to the sanctification of work. He decided to adopt the Latin phrase "Opus Dei" ("Work of God") as the name of his undertaking as a result of a conversation with Fr. Sánchez. At the end of one of their meetings, Fr. Sánchez had asked, "How is that

* In contemporary American usage, the term "meditation" has come to be associated with practices of Oriental mysticism. Escrivá used it to refer to the traditional Christian practice of silently pondering and talking with God about the scenes of the Gospel, the truths of faith, and the realities of one's own life. In this sense, the terms "meditation" and "mental prayer" are closely related. As we shall see, Escrivá also used the word "meditation" to refer to a form of preaching in which a priest voices aloud his personal mental prayer to help others to pray and to learn the art of mental prayer so that they can practice it on their own.

Work of God going?" "After I left," Escrivá recalled in 1948, "I began to think: 'Work of God. Opus Dei! Opus, *operatio* . . . work of God.' That's the name I was looking for. And from then on it was called simply Opus Dei." By the end of 1930, Escrivá had begun using the name "Work of God" both in Spanish and in Latin as the proper name of the undertaking God had shown him on October 2, 1928.

Looking for a New Position

During 1930, Escrivá began to feel that he needed to dedicate more time to Opus Dei. His official duties at the Foundation for the Sick were limited to saying Mass and officiating at Benediction. He was, however, so deeply involved in the Foundation's activities, especially visiting the sick and the dying, that it would be impossible to find much more time for Opus Dei as long as he continued to be the Foundation's chaplain.

It would not, however, be easy to find a suitable new position. Although the chaplaincy did not pay well, it was a stable position, and most importantly, it allowed Escrivá to stay in Madrid despite the diocese's strict policy of expelling priests from other dioceses who did not have powerful official reasons for being in Madrid.

A woman he knew through his work in the Foundation introduced him to Fr. Poveda, the founder of the Theresians and the secretary of the Patriarch of the Indies. Fr. Poveda offered to help Escrivá obtain an appointment as an honorary royal chaplain. When Poveda told him that the position, although prestigious, would not give him a right to remain in Madrid, Escrivá declined the offer.

A few weeks later, another opportunity arose, this time an appointment that depended on the Ministry of Justice. Before anything could be done, however, a Republic was proclaimed in Spain, and Escrivá's potential patron lost his own job. Escrivá must have been disappointed, but he saw this new setback as a sign of God's will for him. "God didn't want it. It doesn't bother me at all. Blessed be God!"

* * *

The proclamation of the Second Republic was to affect Opus Dei in ways that went well beyond Escrivá's loss of an opportunity to obtain a position that would permit him to support his family and carry on his foundational activities. To understand subsequent events in Opus Dei's history, it is essential to have some understanding of the political, social, and economic changes provoked by the coming of the Republic and of Escrivá's reaction to them.

The Environment Turns Hostile

 1931

The Coming of the Second Republic

When King Alfonso XIII forced Primo de Rivera to resign in January 1930, the king hoped to reestablish political normality under a constitutional monarchy. The transitional Berenguer government planned to feel its way, step by step, toward that goal, starting with municipal elections in April 1931.

Spanish society was highly fragmented and polarized. The monarchy's inability to find a solution to the country's problems between 1898 and 1923 and its complicity in Primo de Rivera's rejection of the constitution had soured many Spaniards on monarchical government. Even among socially and economically conservative voters, only a small percentage backed parties that made the monarchical form of government a principal part of their platform. Many other conservatives preferred the monarchy to the republic, in part because Spain's experience with republican government during the short-lived First Republic (1873-1874) made them wary of republics. They were not, however, passionately committed to the defense of the monarchy.

A significant number of voters supported bourgeois parties such as the Radical Republicans, which took their political ideology from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. For them, overthrowing the monarchy and establishing a democratic republic was a principal political goal.

The largest working-class party was the Socialists. Their principal goal was economic and social change inspired by the doctrines of Marx, but they strongly favored a republic. Many other industrial and agricultural workers, especially in the impoverished

south, were Anarchists. They were opposed to the monarchy but would not participate in the elections on political principle. Only a tiny minority of workers belonged to the Communist party.

The elections held in April 1931 were only for town councils, but everyone viewed them as a first test of public opinion on the issue of monarchy versus republic. The early results—mostly from the larger cities—showed a majority of republican votes. King Alfonso XIII was disheartened by this rebuff and by lack of support from the army and the most important police force, the Civil Guard. He left the country on April 14, 1931, and a republic was proclaimed. Significant numbers of Catholics, especially in the larger cities, had voted for republican candidates, and many others were willing to give the new regime a chance.

A provisional coalition government was presided over by Niceto Alcalá Zamora, a former monarchist converted to republicanism, whose Catholicism reassured moderate opinion. Two other Catholics formed part of the provisional government: the conservative Miguel Maura, minister of the interior, and Lluís Nicolau, a Catalan regionalist, minister of the economy. The majority of the new government was, however, more or less openly anti-Catholic and comprised three Socialists, two Radical Socialists, two Radicals, and one member each of the Left Republicans and a Galician regional party.

One of the provisional government's first measures was a declaration of religious freedom and the separation of Church and state; but it assured Catholics that it would not persecute any religion. Few Catholics welcomed the proclamation of religious freedom or the proposal to disestablish the Church. The initial reaction of the Catholic rank and file, however, and that of the Catholic hierarchy, was restrained. The majority continued to accept the new regime, perhaps with misgivings but without overt hostility.

In a letter to the nuncio, the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pacelli, urged Catholics not to give importance to the question of monarchy versus republic but to concentrate on the defense of social order and the rights of the Church. The nuncio, in his turn, exhorted Catholics, and particularly the bishops, to accept the new regime and to remain united in defense of the Church. The

first sign of overt hostility of some members of the hierarchy came on May 1, 1931, when the archbishop of Toledo and primate of Spain, Cardinal Segura, published a pastoral letter praising the king.

Spanish Anticlericalism

The situation changed dramatically on May 10, 1931, as a result of the events historians refer to as the “Burning of Convents.” To understand those events, it is necessary to examine in some detail the roots of Spanish anticlericalism.

At the beginning of the Second Republic, Spaniards were divided, as they had been for more than a century, not only by questions of social and economic policy but by bitter differences in attitude toward the Church and its role in society. Spaniards’ position with respect to the Church was most frequently what identified them as left, center, or right on the political spectrum.

The vast majority of Spaniards were baptized Catholics. Many took their religion seriously and were happy to see Catholic influence in the country’s legislation on marriage and education. Some devout Catholics could be called *anticlerical* in the sense that they were critical of the shortcomings of the clergy and wanted to see the Church reformed in various ways. Escrivá would frequently describe himself as *anticlerical* in the sense that he did not want the clergy to meddle in political or economic affairs but rather to dedicate themselves to their ministry.

In Spanish political discourse, however, the term “anticlerical” was normally reserved for groups who wanted to see a reduction or elimination of the Church’s influence on the country’s life. This kind of anticlericalism was widespread among bourgeois political liberals who took their ideology from the Enlightenment. It was also common among Socialists and among the members of Spain’s large Anarchist party and labor union. This type of anticlericalism had deep roots in Spanish history. What follows is an examination of its most important aspects in the period following the upheaval caused in Spain and the rest of Europe by the French Revolution and Napoleon’s conquests.

In 1834, rumors ran through Madrid that Jesuits and groups of friars had caused a cholera epidemic among the poor by poisoning the public water supply in order to punish the liberal capital for its impiety. Between fifty and one hundred priests and monks lost their lives in the riots that ensued. The propaganda that triggered the riots was similar in tone and psychology to the crude anti-Semite stories of ritual murders of children by Jews that routinely circulated in many parts of Europe. The rumors of well poisonings can be traced to middle-class, anticlerical propagandists from Masonic lodges and other secret societies that were a powerful force among Spanish liberals. The fact that urban mobs believed the rumors and acted upon them, however, suggests that by the early nineteenth century a significant number of workers were already sufficiently disaffected from the Church to be open to such crude propaganda.

In the period between 1830 and 1860, liberal governments had confiscated large amounts of Church-owned land and other productive property that had been used to support the clergy and the members of religious orders. There was little tradition in Spain of regular contributions by ordinary Catholics for the support of the clergy and religious. The confiscation of the Church's property, therefore, made the clergy dependent on the inadequate stipends that the government agreed to pay in partial compensation for the confiscated property.

During the period of the conservative resurgence that began in 1876 and continued until Spain's humiliating defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Church regained some of its social position and influence, although not its property. The Church also flourished internally during this period, with a new fervor and an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The period also witnessed, however, a hardening of opposition to the Church on the part of liberals and working-class parties.

As the twentieth century approached, both sides increasingly saw themselves as threatened and besieged. Fervent Catholics saw society and religion endangered by the advance of a secular wave of Freethinkers and Masons, inspired by liberalism. Many

Catholics considered liberalism a heresy and rejected altogether the constitutional parliamentary monarchy. Others accepted the constitutional regime as a lesser evil, but yearned for a fully confessional state that would enforce Catholic unity. To liberals, the resurgence of the Church meant handing Spain over to the enemy of modern institutions and allowing the forces of the past to direct society. Between 1876 and 1898, the Church became increasingly identified with the political establishment and the upper classes. At the same time, a growing rift developed between the Church and the urban, lower classes and the landless peasants of the south. Religious instruction among these groups was almost nonexistent, and efforts to reach out to them were largely unsuccessful. During the decade that followed the disasters of the Spanish-American War and the loss of Spain's colonial empire, Spaniards of all political persuasions sought ways to "regenerate" the country. Conservatives focused on reform of political institutions. Liberals and radicals also recognized the need for political reform, but they sought to transform the entire society. An important part of their agenda consisted in reducing or eliminating the role of the Church in Spanish life.

Middle-class Republicans stressed political and cultural change, in which enmity toward the Church was almost as important as opposition to the monarchy. Among the working class, attitudes varied sharply between Socialists and Anarchists, but both were anticlerical. For the Socialists, inspired by Marx, economic change was paramount. They saw the Church as a mainstay of the existing economic order that needed to be rooted out, but economic revolution was much more important to them than attacking the Church directly. The Anarchists, by contrast, aimed in the first place to create a new morality and a new culture. The elimination of religion would be a defining feature of the new order they hoped to inaugurate. For them, opposition to the Church, and more generally to religion, was not merely something that would facilitate economic revolution, but a vital component of a new way of life. Anticlericalism turned violent in Barcelona in July 1909. The violence was triggered by events that had no apparent link to the Church. After a defeat in Spain's

North African colonies, the army mobilized reserve units and called up troops from Barcelona. These decisions led to massive draft riots that soon took on revolutionary overtones. The main focus of the violence was the burning of monasteries, convents, and schools and the profaning of tombs and religious images. By the time the riots had been put down, twenty-one of Barcelona's fifty-eight churches, thirty of its seventy-five convents and monasteries, and about thirty other Church-related schools and buildings used for social services had gone up in flames. Although two clergymen were killed and another perished in a fire set by the rioters, the violence was primarily directed against property rather than persons.

Various explanations have been offered as to why draft riots should give rise to widespread anticlerical violence. It may be that the rioters viewed the Church as allied with the wealthy and powerful, who decreed the draft while they themselves avoided its effects. Alternatively, the Church may have been singled out as somehow morally responsible for the injustices of a society that condemned the sons of workers to die in useless colonial wars. Neither explanation, however, fully accounts for the profaning of tombs and religious symbols. Whatever the cause, the Barcelona riots confirmed that sizeable numbers of urban workers had not only grown disaffected from the Church but had become violently hostile toward it, at least in part because of the violently anticlerical propaganda that the Radical Republican party had been carrying on for years in Barcelona.

During the next two decades, there were no major outbreaks of anticlerical violence, although propaganda against the Church continued. In the 1920s, the support offered to the Primo de Rivera regime by prominent Catholics helped exacerbate the anticlericalism of many Republicans and other liberals, who became more convinced than ever that the Church was a major obstacle to their desires for a more liberal society. During the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the interlude that followed it, however, anticlerical forces were held in check by the government, which prevented them from taking any overt action against the Church.

The Burning of Convents

The provisional government of the Second Republic had little interest in restraining manifestations of anticlericalism, as became apparent shortly after the proclamation of the Republic. The playing of the monarchist hymn at a royalist club in Madrid on May 10, 1931, provoked an attack by supporters of the Republic that soon degenerated into three days of violence directed primarily against churches, monasteries, and convents. Rioting soon spread from Madrid to Seville, Malaga, and four other cities. The government, at first, did nothing to quell the growing violence.

When the mob began to attack churches and convents in Madrid, Escrivá feared that the church of the Foundation for the Sick might be sacked and the Eucharist profaned. Dressed in borrowed lay clothes and accompanied by his younger brother, he slipped out the side door of the church "like a thief," carrying a ciborium full of consecrated Hosts wrapped in a cassock and newspaper. As he hurried through the streets, he prayed with tears in his eyes, "Jesus, may each sacrilegious fire increase my fire of love and reparation!" After depositing the Eucharist in the nearby home of a friend, Escrivá observed in horror the smoke-filled sky of Madrid as churches and convents went up in flames.

On May 13, he heard rumors that the Foundation for the Sick might soon be attacked. He quickly found rooms for rent on Viriato Street and moved his family and their few belongings there. During the coming months, the family was crowded into a tiny apartment whose only windows faced an air shaft. Escrivá's room was so small that he could not even fit in a chair; he had to write kneeling down, using the bed for a desk.

The provisional Republican government did not provoke the burning of the convents, but many of its members were sympathetic to the rioters. The Left-Republican minister Manuel Azaña, who was rapidly becoming the most powerful political figure in the country, told his colleagues, "All the convents of Madrid are not worth the life of a single Republican." He threatened to resign "if a single person is injured in Madrid because of

this stupidity." For several days, the government did nothing to control the riots.

Once the government finally intervened, the violence ended quickly, but by that time the damage had been done. Approximately a hundred churches and convents had been burnt, including forty-one in Malaga, a medium-size city on the Mediterranean coast. The government's inaction during the early days of the rioting convinced Catholics throughout the country that the new regime was an implacable enemy of the Church. Azaña's reluctance to use force against anticlerical rioters would eventually cost the Republic and the country dearly.

Anticlerical Legislation of the Provisional Government

The sense of the Republic's hostility to the Church soon increased as the provisional government issued a series of decrees and regulations that upset many Catholics. It established full freedom of conscience and cult; made religious instruction voluntary in state schools; dissolved the chaplain corps of the army and navy; substituted a promise for the traditional oath of office; deprived the Church of representation in the National Council on Education; and prohibited government officials from attending public religious acts. In a tolerant, religiously pluralistic society, many of these actions would seem acceptable. Most Spanish Catholics, reared in a society in which virtually everyone was at least nominally Catholic and in which close cooperation between Church and state had been the norm for centuries, viewed these actions as hostile to the Church. Their perception of hostility was increased by the government's failure to negotiate or even consult with Church officials about changes in religious policy, despite a long tradition of handling religious affairs through treaties with the Holy See.

In May 1931, the government expelled the bishop of Vitoria. The next month it expelled Cardinal Segura, the highest ranking churchman in Spain, for anti-Republican statements and attitudes. Although both bishops had given Republican officials sufficient grounds for considering them opponents of the new regime,

their expulsion confirmed the conviction of many Catholics that the new government was an enemy of the Church.

The Constituent Assembly and the Constitution

In the elections for a constituent assembly, Catholics and conservatives were in disarray. The electoral law prepared by the provisional government awarded each seat to the party that won the district, with the result that small differences in popular vote could lead to a large difference in seats. Conservative or explicitly Catholic candidates won only a small number of seats, although they had garnered a significant number of votes.

Parties hostile to the Church had an overwhelming majority in the constituent assembly. The largest bloc was made up of Socialists. Although they were more concerned about economic questions than about religion, they would gladly support anticlerical measures. Another large bloc belonged to the Radical Republican party, for which anticlericalism was an essential element of its political faith.

The newly elected majority of the constituent assembly was not interested in a bloody persecution of the Church like the religious persecution Mexico and the Soviet Union were experiencing at that time. However, its goals went well beyond turning Spain into a non-confessional country by severing the ties between Church and state and putting an end to government subsidies to the Church. Republican leaders wanted to transform Spain from a traditional to a modern society. In their view, this could be done only by reducing the influence of the Church in daily life and establishing a secular culture in which religion would play a very limited role.

Republican leaders considered the Church, and particularly the religious orders that played such a large role in Spanish education, the major obstacle to their plans for transforming Spain into a modern secular society. In order to reduce the Church's influence on society, they were committed to abolishing the Jesuits and restricting the activities of other religious orders. Above all, they were determined to eliminate, or at least to reduce, Catholic

influence in education by prohibiting priests and religious from running schools. Like the changes already introduced by the provisional government, all of these goals struck most Spanish Catholics, many of whom drew no distinctions between their religious faith and their social and cultural traditionalism, as unjustified attacks on religion. The Spanish bishops initially limited themselves to exhorting Spanish Catholics to accept peacefully the legitimate decrees of the government and to remain united. In August, however, they prepared a collective pastoral letter criticizing not only the proposed provisions of the constitution but also "the so-called 'modern' freedoms that are considered the most precious conquest of the French Revolution and the untouchable patrimony of the democracies hostile to the Church." The moderate members of the hierarchy and the papal nuncio considered the document inopportune, but the intransigent faction, headed by the cardinal of Toledo, successfully insisted on its publication.

The draft constitution prepared by the constituent assembly during summer and fall 1931 contained a number of provisions that directly affected the Church. The first important measure to be approved, Article 3, put an end to the union of Church and State that had characterized Spain for centuries. "The State," Article 3 declared, "has no official religion." On October 14, 1931, by a vote of 178 to 59, the assembly approved what would become Article 26 of the Constitution, the principal provision dealing with Church affairs. It forbade the central, regional, and local governments to favor or support the Church or any religious association in any way. Almost a century earlier, the government had confiscated the property whose income the Church had used until then to support the clergy. Subsequently, the government had paid subsidies to the diocesan clergy. Article 26 called for eliminating the subsidies within two years.

The most important provisions of Article 26 affected the religious orders. An early draft had called for dissolution of all religious orders. The measure approved by the assembly did not go that far, but it did provide for the dissolution of the Jesuits and the confiscation of all their property. Other orders were subject to the threat of dissolution if the government felt their activities might

constitute a danger to the security of the state. In addition, religious orders were forbidden to own any property beyond what was strictly necessary for the maintenance of their members and the fulfillment of their specific aims.

The most controversial provision of Article 26 forbade the orders that were permitted to continue working in Spain from engaging in education. This sectarian provision demonstrated the determination of the anticlerical majority of the assembly to undermine the Church at any cost. Spain was suffering from a desperate lack of schools, and the members of the assembly listed education among their top priorities. Yet they were attempting to force the closing of schools that were educating about thirty percent of the country's high-school students and about twenty percent of its grade-school students, because they hoped that would reduce the Church's influence in the country.

Escrivá's Reaction to Growing Anticlericalism

Like all devout Catholics, Escrivá was saddened by the overtly anti-Catholic stance of many of the new political leaders of the Second Republic and the harm they might do the Church. On April 20, 1931, he wrote in his personal notes:

May the Immaculate Virgin defend our poor Spain and may God confound the enemies of our Mother, the Catholic Church. The Spanish Republic. For twenty-four hours, Madrid was one huge madhouse. . . . Things seem to have calmed down. . . . But the Masons do not sleep. . . . The Heart of Jesus also keeps watch! This is my hope. How often these days, I have understood, I have heard the powerful cries of our Lord, that he loves his Work.

Spanish Catholics were sharply divided over how best to defend the Church. Monarchists believed that the only way was to overturn the Second Republic and bring back the monarchy. Other Catholics argued that the form of government was not an essential matter. Catholics, they said, could and should work

within the republican framework to protect the Church's rights. Passions ran high on both sides of the debate. Opposing views were often taken as a sign of wrong-headedness at best and as lack of zeal in the service of the Church at worst.

Escrivá took no part in these debates. From his seminary days when he had been repelled by the clericalism that characterized large parts of the Spanish Church, he had been convinced that priests should respect the right of lay Catholics to form their own political opinions and to join political parties of their choice. Although he had a lively interest in current events, he made it an inflexible rule throughout his life not to express his political opinions.

Escrivá advised Zorzano shortly after the proclamation of the Republic, "Don't worry one way or the other about the political change. Be concerned only that they do not offend God." He wrote to him in August 1931, "I suppose that all these attacks on our Christ will have served to inflame you even more in his service. Try to belong to him more each day . . . , with prayer. Offer him also each day, as expiation that is very pleasing in his divine eyes, the annoyances that life continually brings with it." He gave similar advice to the nuns of St. Elizabeth's convent, who were much disturbed by the news of anticlerical legislation and terrified by new outbreaks of violence like those that occurred during the burning of convents in May 1931. A day or two after the approval of Article 26, Escrivá spoke to the nuns "about Love, about the Cross, about Joy, and about Victory." "Away with anxiety," he told them. "We are at the beginning of the end." As for himself, Escrivá recorded: "Saint Teresa has obtained for me from our Jesus the Joy with a capital letter that I have today when apparently, humanly speaking, I should be sad for the Church and for my own affairs (which are truly going badly). Much faith, and expiation, but more important than faith and expiation, much Love."

Standing alone, Escrivá's advice to Zorzano "not to worry one way or the other about the political change" might suggest that he advised indifference to politics and concern only with religious matters. That was not the case. He encouraged an active interest

in politics and careful fulfillment of civic responsibilities. In sharp contrast to the clerical one-party mentality that prevailed among Catholics at the time, however, he believed that it was up to individual Catholics to make their own choices about how to implement the Church's teaching in practice. He scrupulously refrained from expressing his own political preferences, limiting himself to encouraging all those who sought his advice to take seriously their civic duties and to exercise their rights as citizens in ways that would make the society more Christian.

Stoning with Hail Marys

Escrivá continued to wear his cassock in public and, therefore, increasingly found himself the object of insults. In earlier years, he had occasionally encountered hostility simply because he was a priest. Once a bricklayer had jeered at him as he was walking past a construction site. Remembering his spiritual director's advice and reigning in his temper, Escrivá turned back to talk to the group of workmen who had stopped working and had been enjoying the scene. He recorded in his notes, "In the end, they admitted I was right. Even the fellow who shouted at me shook hands." On another occasion, riding on the streetcar toward the Cicuéndez Academy, Escrivá had noticed a plasterer moving toward him with the obvious intention of soiling his cassock with the plaster that covered his overalls. Taking the initiative, Escrivá gave him an embrace.

After the proclamation of the Republic, the insults became more frequent and more aggressive. During the summer of 1931, Escrivá made a novena to a recently deceased member of the Damas Apostolicas, Mercedes Reyna, visiting her tomb each day in a cemetery located in a poor neighborhood of Madrid. Every day of the novena brought with it new insults. Once, on his way back from the cemetery, a bricklayer came at him shouting, "A cockroach! Step on it!" Despite his resolutions not to pay attention to such things, Escrivá was unable to contain himself. "What courage," he retorted, "to pick a fight with someone who walks past without offending you!" The other workers told the brick-

layer to shut up, and one of them tried to excuse his fellow worker's conduct. "It's not right," he said with the air of someone giving a satisfactory explanation, "but you have to understand, it's that he hates priests." On another day, a boy standing with a group of other boys shouted, "A priest! Let's throw stones at him!" Escrivá recounts his reaction: "With a movement that was anterior to any act of my will, I shut the breviary I had been reading, and faced them: 'You rascals! Is that what your mothers teach you?'" "I added other words," he concludes, without specifying what they were.

Escrivá was hit several times by stones, and once a well-aimed soccer ball struck him full in the face. Some of the Damas Apostolicas suffered much worse. One day they were attacked and dragged down the street of a working-class neighborhood while someone drove a shoemaker's awl into their scalps. When one of them tried to defend the others, the attackers ripped off part of her scalp, leaving her disfigured.

In the midst of this hostile environment, Escrivá struggled to control his temper and to "stone with Hail Marys" his attackers. He was not always successful, but, by mid-September 1931, he was able to record in his notes:

I have to thank my God for a noteworthy change. Until recently, the insults and jeers I received for being a priest (mostly since the coming of the Republic, before only rarely) made me angry. I made a resolution to entrust to our Lady with a Hail Mary those from whom I heard rude and foul expressions. I did it. It was hard. Now, when I hear that sort of ignoble words, I usually feel moved with pity, considering the misfortune of the poor people who do those things. They think they are doing something good, because people have taken advantage of their ignorance and passions to make them believe that priests are not only lazy parasites but their enemies, accomplices of the bourgeoisie that exploits them.

Escrivá finished his note with a characteristic exclamation that reflected his conviction, even at this early stage when he still had


little to show for his efforts, that God intended to do great things through Opus Dei: “Your Work, Lord,” he concluded, “will open their eyes!”

A few months later, he was deeply distressed by the decree of dissolution of the Jesuits. He wrote, “Yesterday I suffered when I learned about the expulsion of the Jesuits and the other anti-Catholic measures adopted by the Parliament. My head ached and I felt sick until afternoon. In the afternoon, dressed as a layman, I went with Adolfo to Chamartin [where the Jesuits’ house was located]. Fr. Sanchez and all the other Jesuits were delighted to suffer persecution. . . . What serenely beautiful things they said to us!”

* * *

The second half of 1931 was an exceptionally difficult period for Escrivá. He suffered because of the many attacks on the Church launched by the Republican government and its supporters. He continued to encounter great difficulty in finding people capable of understanding and committing themselves to his message. His family’s financial situation was extremely difficult. And, finally, his own situation as a priest from outside the diocese, exposed to being expelled at any moment, was highly unstable. These events and circumstances will be explored following an examination of the developments in Escrivá’s interior life that helped clarify and shape the spirit of Opus Dei.

New Lights

 1931

In the history of Opus Dei, the second half of 1931 is notable above all for the series of graces and insights that God bestowed upon Escrivá. They not only enriched his own personal spiritual life but illuminated many aspects of the spirit of Opus Dei.

Lifting Up the Cross

The first of the special graces Escrivá received in 1931 came on August 7, the day on which the diocese of Madrid celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ. Escrivá's notes record what happened as he celebrated Mass at a side altar in the church of the Foundation for the Sick:

At the moment of elevating the Sacred Host, without losing proper recollection, without being distracted . . . there came to my mind, with extraordinary force and clarity, the phrase of Scripture "*et si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad me ipsum*" [And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself] (Jn 12: 32). Ordinarily, in the face of the supernatural, I am afraid. Afterward comes the *ne timeas* [do not be afraid], it is I. And I understood that it would be the men and women of God who would lift the Cross with the doctrines of Christ over the pinnacle of all human activity. . . . And I saw our Lord triumph, drawing to himself all things.

Despite feeling empty of virtue and knowledge (humility is truth . . . , without beating around the bush), I wanted to write books of fire that would run through the world like a living flame, filling men with their light and warmth, converting

poor hearts into red-hot coals, to offer them to Jesus as rubies of his royal crown.

Reflecting years later on this experience, Escrivá said that he understood our Lord to be saying those words to him “not in the sense in which the Scripture says them. I say it to you in the sense that you are to raise me up in all human activities, in the sense that all over the world there should be Christians with a personal and very free dedication, who will be other Christs.”

This experience brought with it a deepened sense of the meaning and importance of secularity and of the work of Catholics in all professions and trades. It was precisely in the midst of their normal human activities that the men and women of Opus Dei were to strive to become other Christs. Escrivá would develop the idea in a 1940 letter addressed to the members of Opus Dei:

United to Christ by prayer and mortification in our daily work, in the thousand human circumstances of our simple life as ordinary Catholics, we will work this marvel of putting all things at the feet of our Lord, lifted up on the cross. He has let himself be raised up there by his great love for the world and for men. . . . In this way, work is for us not only the natural way of meeting our economic needs . . . but also, and above all, the specific means of personal sanctification that God our Father has pointed out for us.

Escrivá learned from this experience, as one theologian has observed, that Christians “even and precisely inasmuch as they are united to Christ in secular activities—the sanctification of work—are Christ on the cross, Christ lifted up before the world, before their companions at work. They are Christ elevated in human history, he to whom we can ‘look’ to ‘see’ and be attracted.” All human activities, Escrivá understood with new depth, are settings in which Christ wishes to be present and in which his followers can become “other Christs.”

At same time, Escrivá saw more clearly the apostolic importance of the presence of dedicated Christians striving to sanctify

themselves and their surroundings in all the trades and professions:

Working and loving as we perform the tasks that make up our profession or job—the same one we were doing when he came looking for us—we carry out the apostolic task of putting Christ at the summit and in the heart of all the activities of men. No upright activity is excluded from our work, which becomes a manifestation of Christ's redemptive love.

The task of the men and women of Opus Dei would be not only to sanctify themselves in their daily work but to make Christ present in their workplace by being Christ through prayer and sacrifice.

For All Times and Places

On September 7, 1931, Escrivá grasped with new clarity that God wanted Opus Dei to make Christ present throughout the world and down through the centuries. He had gone in the afternoon to the church of the Foundation for the Sick, but he was finding it very difficult to pray:

I didn't feel like it. But I remained there, like a puppet. Every now and then, coming back to myself, I thought: "Now you see, good Jesus, that if I'm here it is for you, to please you." Nothing. My imagination ran wild, far from my body and my will. It was like a faithful dog, lying at his master's feet. He dozes off and dreams of running up and down, and hunting, and of his friends (dogs like himself). He grows agitated and barks softly . . . but without leaving his master. That's how I was, exactly like a dog.

In the midst of his distractions he

realized that, without wanting to, I was repeating some Latin words that I had never paid any attention to and that I had no reason to recall. . . . The words of Scripture that I found on

my lips say, "*et fui tecum in omnibus ubicumque ambulasti, firmans regnum tuum in aeternum*" [and I was with you everywhere, wherever you walked, establishing your kingdom forever]. I applied my mind to the phrase, considering it slowly. Afterward, yesterday afternoon, and again today . . . I saw clearly that Christ Jesus made me understand, for our consolation, that "the Work of God will be with him everywhere, affirming the reign of Jesus Christ forever."

This experience confirmed Escrivá's conviction that Opus Dei was not for the Spain of his days but rather was for all times and all places.

Escrivá worked hard to transmit this conviction to the first members of Opus Dei. For instance, in a letter written in 1932, he urged the handful of members Opus Dei then had, and those he dreamed of in the future, to be certain that Opus Dei "will be down through all the centuries with God's grace a marvelous instrument for the glory of God: 'May the glory of the Lord endure forever!'" (Ps 104: 31). In a 1934 document he entitled "Instruction on the Supernatural Spirit of the Work of God," he wrote: "We are not a circumstantial organization. We have to . . . last until the end of the world. Nor have we come to meet the needs of a particular country or a period, because, from the very first moment, Jesus wants his Work to have a universal, catholic heart."

Children of God

One day, toward the end of September 1931, Escrivá experienced an overwhelming sense of the reality of God's fatherhood and of his own sonship. During a long period of prayer of union and thanksgiving, he contemplated these joyful realities. He described the experience briefly, but in sufficient detail to give some idea of its content: "I considered God's goodness toward me. Full of interior joy, I would have shouted on the street, 'Father! Father!' so that everyone might know my filial gratitude. Although not shouting, I walked about calling him softly, 'Father!' with the certainty that it was pleasing to him."

A few weeks later, on October 16, 1931, he experienced an even more intense and prolonged sense of being a son of God. Once again, this period of sublime prayer (which he later described as the most elevated prayer God ever gave him) occurred not in church but on the street. He had spent some time in church trying without success to pray. After leaving the church on a bright fall morning, he bought a newspaper and took the street-car. There he was invaded by "prayer of copious ardent affections," lost in contemplation of "this marvelous reality: God is my father."

[I] felt our Lord's action, bringing to my heart and my lips, with irresistible force, the tender invocation "*Abba! Pater!*" [*Abba, Father!*]* I was on the street, in a streetcar. . . . I probably made that prayer out loud. I wandered through the streets of Madrid for an hour, or perhaps two. I can't say. I didn't feel time go by. People must have taken me for a madman. I was contemplating, with lights that were not my own, this astounding truth that would remain in my soul like a burning coal and never go out.

Looking back on this experience years later, Escrivá saw an intimate connection between the sufferings he had been undergoing and the sense of being a son of God.

When God sent me those blows back in 1931, I didn't understand them. . . . Then all at once, in the midst of such great bitterness, came the words: "You are my son (Ps 2: 7), you are Christ." And I could only stammer: "*Abba, Pater! Abba, Pater! Abba! Abba! Abba!*" Now I see it with new light, like a new discovery, just as one sees, after years have passed, the hand of God, of divine Wisdom, of the All-Powerful. You've led me, Lord, to understand that to find the Cross is to find happiness,

* *Abba* is a familiar, affectionate term used by Jewish children to address their fathers. Christ used it in the prayer in the Garden (Mk 14:36), and St. Paul used it to describe how Christians, inspired by the Holy Spirit, address God (Rom 8: 15 and Gal 4: 6).

joy. And I see the reason with greater clarity than ever: to find the Cross is to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ, and therefore to be a son of God.

Escrivá understood that this experience was not meant to be merely personal. Rather, it signified that the sense of being sons and daughters of God was to be a fundamental characteristic of Opus Dei's spirit. He begged God to preserve it in the members of Opus Dei. On one occasion he prayed:

Lord, I ask your Mother, St. Joseph our Patron, and my ministerial Archangel, to always preserve this spirit for me and my children. *Ne respicias peccata mea, sed fidem* [Do not regard my sins, but my faith]. May this faith, this love for the Cross be ours till death! This divine light leads us to always understand clearly that it's worthwhile letting ourselves be nailed to the Cross, since it means entering into Life, immersing ourselves in the Life of Christ. The Cross: it is there you find Christ, and you have to lose yourself in him! Then there will be no more sorrow, no more suffering. You mustn't say: Lord, I can't do any more, for I'm so wretched. . . . No! It's not true! On the Cross, you will be Christ, and you will sense you are a son of God. And you will exclaim, "*Abba, Pater!* What happiness to find you, Lord!"

The fatherhood of God is, of course, a truth revealed by Christ in the Gospel and forms an important part of Christian doctrine. As such it had been present in the spirit of Opus Dei from the very beginning. Now, however, it took on a new importance in Escrivá's own life and in that of the members of the Work. In 1969, Escrivá explained:

I could tell you exactly the when and where, down to the moment and the place, of that first prayer of a child of God. I learned to call God "Father" as a child in the Our Father. But to feel, to see, to admire God's desire that we be his children . . . , that was on the street, in a streetcar, for an hour or

an hour and a half, I'm not sure. "*Abba, Pater!*" I had to shout.

There are some marvelous words in the Gospel (all the words of the Gospel are marvelous): "No one knows the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Mt 11: 27). That day, that day he willed in an explicit, clear, categorical way that, together with me, you would always feel that you are children of God, of this Father who is in heaven and who will give us what we ask him in his Son's name.

Spiritual Childhood

The sense of being a son of God, which is the foundation of the spirit of Opus Dei, was closely connected in Escrivá's experience with the spiritual attitude of being a very small child in God's sight. He had read *Story of a Soul* by St. Thérèse of Lisieux, known as the "Little Flower." In addition, one of the Damas Apostolicas, Mercedes Reyna, had introduced him to some aspects of the Little Flower's spirit, including the idea of "hiding and disappearing" so as to give all the glory to God. Nonetheless, Escrivá dated his discovery of the way of spiritual childhood to graces he received through the intercession of the Little Flower on the third anniversary of Opus Dei's founding, October 2, 1931, feast of the Guardian Angels and vigil of her feast day.

On that day, in Escrivá's words, "little Thérèse took me, with Mercedes [who had died sometime earlier], through Mary, my Mother and Lady, to the Love of Jesus." His notes are characteristically silent about the exact nature of the experience but give us some glimpse of its essence:

I paid compliments [to my Guardian Angel] and I asked him to teach me to love Jesus at the very least as he loves him. Undoubtedly St. Thérèse, the Little Flower, wanted to give me something for her upcoming feast, and she convinced my Guardian Angel to teach me to pray like a child. What childish things I said to my Lord!

I prayed with the trusting confidence of a child who speaks to the Big Friend of whose love he is sure: "May I live only for your Glory. May I live only for your Love. . . . I recalled and loyally recognized that I do everything badly. This, my Jesus, cannot surprise you. I can't do anything right. Help me. Do things for me, and you'll see how well they turn out." Then daringly, but without departing from the truth, I said to you: "Soak me, inebriate me in your Spirit and thus I will do your Will. I want to do it. If I don't do it, it's . . . because you don't help me."

Shortly thereafter, he saw an image of the Christ Child as an infant with his arms crossed on his chest and his eyes half open. Escrivá was deeply moved by the image and kissed it so often he said, "I devoured it with kisses and would gladly have stolen it." In the following weeks, his devotion to the infant Jesus grew by leaps and bounds:

The Child Jesus. How this devotion has entered my heart since I saw the very great Thief that my nuns keep near the door of their cloister! Jesus-child. Jesus-adolescent. I like to see you like that, Lord, because . . . it makes me more daring. I like to see you as a little child, in order to fool myself into thinking that you need me.

An important element in Escrivá's childhood was participating in the Gospel scenes he was contemplating, whether when saying the rosary or meditating on passages of the Gospel. After Mass one day, during a novena in preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1931, he wrote a series of considerations on the mysteries of the rosary, which he later published under the title *Holy Rosary*. In the introduction, he explained that his goal was to reveal to those who earnestly want to serve God "a secret that may very well be the beginning of the way that Christ wants them to follow":

My friend, if you want to be great, become little.

To be little it is necessary to believe as children believe, to love as children love, to give yourself up as children give themselves up . . . to pray as children pray.

And all of this is necessary to accomplish what I am going to reveal to you in these lines:

The beginning of the way, at the end of which you will find yourself completely carried away with love for Jesus, is a confident love for Mary.

Do you want to love our Lady? —Well, get to know her. How? —By praying her rosary *well*.

But, in the rosary . . . we always say the same things! —Always the same? And don't those who are in love always say the same things to each other? . . . Could it not be that there is monotony in your rosary because, instead of pronouncing words like a man, you emit sounds like an animal, while your mind is very far from God? Moreover, listen: before each decade we are told the mystery to be *contemplated*.

Have you . . . ever *contemplated* these mysteries?

Become little. Come with me and—this is the essence of what I have to confide—we will live the life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Each day we will render them a new service. We will hear their family conversations. We will see the Messiah grow up. We will admire his thirty years of hidden life. . . . We will be present at his Passion and death. . . . We will be awed by the glory of his Resurrection. . . . In a word—we will contemplate, carried away with Love (the only real love is Love), each and every instant of Christ Jesus.

Another example of Escrivá's childlike relation with God is found in notes he took during his prayer on December 28, 1931. That day was the feast of the Holy Innocents, which is Spain's equivalent of April Fool's Day. When he visited the convent of St. Elizabeth, he learned that on that day the nuns had a novice act as prioress and the youngest nun as subprioress, giving orders to the older nuns. Thinking about this, Escrivá wrote:

Child. You are the last donkey, the least among those who love Jesus. So you have every right to give orders in heaven. Let your imagination run loose, and your heart as well. I want Jesus to pardon me . . . everything. Let all the holy souls in purgatory, purified in less than a second, go up to rejoice in our God, because today I'm acting for him.

I want . . . to scold some guardian angels I know (it's just a joke, but half in serious), and to order them to obey, yes to obey, Jesus' little donkey in things that are all for the glory of our King-Christ.

And after giving lots and lots of orders, I would say to my Mother, Holy Mary, "My Lady, not even as a game do I want you to cease to be the owner and empress of all creation."

And then she would kiss me on the forehead, leaving as a sign of such a great favor a great bright star above my eyes. And with this new light, I would see all the children of God down to the end of the world, fighting our Lord's battles, and always victors with him. . . . And I would hear a more than heavenly voice, like the sound of many waters and the roll of a great thunder clap, gentle despite its intensity, like the sound of many harps played harmoniously by an infinite number of musicians, saying, "We want him to reign! To God be all the glory! All with Peter to Jesus through Mary!"

And before this astounding day is over, I will say to him, "O Jesus, I want to be a bonfire of madly passionate Love! I want my mere presence to be enough to set the world on fire for many miles around, with an inextinguishable fire. I want to know that I am yours. Then, let the Cross come; I will never be afraid of expiation. . . . To suffer and love. To love and suffer. What a magnificent way! The faith of Peter. John's love. Paul's zeal.

The donkey still has three minutes of divinization, good Jesus, and he orders you . . . to give him more zeal than Paul, more love than John, more faith than Peter. The last wish: Jesus, may I never lack the Holy Cross.

Escrivá himself derived great benefit from practicing spiritual childhood; and early in 1932, he began to study carefully books on this approach to the spiritual life, including St. Thérèse of Lisieux's *Story of a Soul*. Unlike the sense of being sons and daughters of God, however, he did not consider spiritual childhood necessary for all members of Opus Dei. Dealing with God as a small child is a wonderful way of dealing with him as a son or daughter, but it is not the only possible way. Escrivá noted early in 1932 that all the members of the Work should become familiar with the way of spiritual childhood, but that they did not need to follow it.

Deeds Are Love

Escrivá's efforts to live spiritual childhood gave rise to a significant incident in his spiritual life. He was in the habit of saying, as he was ministering to the nuns of St. Elizabeth, "Jesus, I don't know how much they love you, but I love you more than all of them together." On February 16, 1932, he received a chilling response to this declaration. He records it in his personal notes as follows:

February 16, 1932. + For several days I have had a bad cold. This was the occasion for my lack of generosity with my God to come to the surface, slacking off in prayer and in the thousand little things that a child—and more, a donkey child—can offer to his Lord every day. I realized this and that I was putting off certain resolutions to dedicate more time and interest to practices of piety. But I put my mind at rest thinking, "later, when you are well, when the family's economic situation improves . . . then you'll do it."

But today, after giving Holy Communion to the nuns before holy Mass, I said to Jesus what I say to him so often, so very often, day and night: . . . "I love you more than they do." At once I understood without words: "Love means deeds, not sweet words and excuses." I immediately saw how little generosity I have. Many unsuspected details to which I had given


no importance came to mind and made me see very clearly my lack of generosity. O Jesus! Help me so that your little donkey may be very generous. Works, works!

As a result of these and other graces, Escrivá saw himself "flooded, drunk with the grace of God." "What a great sin," he wrote, "if I don't correspond. There are times—today was one when I feel desires to shout, 'Enough, Lord, enough!'"

* * *

The graces Escrivá received during the summer and fall of 1931 primarily affected his own interior life. They were not intended, however, to stop there. He received them not simply to enrich his own union with God but to flesh out the spirituality that he would transmit to the members of Opus Dei. For the moment, however, God's generosity in pouring out his grace on Escrivá was neither reflected in an influx of members nor in any easing of Escrivá's situation—an all but destitute priest in constant danger of being ejected from the diocese of Madrid.

Trying to Get Started

 1931-1932

From the Foundation for the Sick to St. Elizabeth's

During the spring and early summer of 1931, Escrivá continued to search for a way to extricate himself from the Foundation for the Sick and dedicate more time to Opus Dei. Beginning around June 13, 1931, he prayed at Mass daily for a solution. His prayers were answered in unexpected fashion on June 18. "I think it was on the fifth day of making this petition that our Lord heard me. There is no doubt that it was he, because he granted my request lavishly. . . . The concession was accompanied by humiliation, injustice, and scorn. May he be blessed!" Escrivá does not explain exactly what happened, but apparently there was a disagreeable falling out.

The answer to his prayers was only partial. He ceased being the official chaplain of the Foundation for the Sick, but no other chaplain had been appointed, and he continued serving on an interim basis until October. He urgently needed a permanent position so he could remain in Madrid and support his family. During the summer, he served briefly at the Church of St. Barbara, but the appointment proved temporary. In the meantime, he learned that the Recollect Augustinian Nuns of the Convent of St. Elizabeth, one of the numerous royal foundations in Madrid, desperately needed someone to say Mass and hear confessions. Their regular chaplain had fallen ill months earlier, and the Recollect Augustinian Fathers had been filling in for him. After the proclamation of the Second Republic, however, anticlerical violence deterred them from passing through dangerous neighborhoods to reach the convent, so the nuns often had no one. Escrivá volunteered to help out until someone could be found.

After several weeks, the nuns decided to seek his appointment as their chaplain. Because of the convent's status as a former royal foundation, both the ecclesiastical authorities and the government had to approve the appointment. Ecclesiastical approval was given in November 1931, but government approval—and with it a regular stipend—did not come until considerably later.

The move from the Foundation for the Sick to St. Elizabeth's proved providential. In November 1931, the diocese of Madrid began a new campaign of expelling priests from other dioceses. Even the influence of the foundress of the Damas Apostolicas might not have been sufficient to convince the diocesan authorities to permit Escrivá to remain in the capital had he still been chaplain of the Foundation. Because his new position was in a royal foundation, however, he was not subject to expulsion.

On the other hand, Escrivá's economic situation was desperate. He could no longer count on his stipend as chaplain, and his income from tutoring and teaching at the Cicuéndez Academy did not even cover basic expenses. "I don't know how we'll be able to live," he exclaimed. At the beginning of September, he observed:

I am suffering great tribulation and helplessness. The motives? Really, the same as always. But it is something very personal that, without taking away my confidence in God, makes me suffer, because I see no human outlet for my situation. Temptations of rebellion come, and I say *serviam* [I will serve].

At the end of the month, the situation remained unchanged:

I find myself in as bad an economic situation as ever. I don't lose my peace. I have absolute trust and confidence that God, my Father, will soon resolve this situation once and for all. If I were alone, poverty, I realize, would be a delight. A priest and poor, lacking even what is necessary. How admirable!

Escrivá saw his poverty as blows God was using to prepare his soul to carry out Opus Dei. He suffered because most of the blows

fell on his family. He wanted to ask God to send him instead a serious illness, but his spiritual director forbade him to do so. On the third anniversary of Opus Dei's founding, he summarized part of his prayer of that day: "I looked him right in the eye and said: 'Fr. Sanchez has prohibited me from asking for that and therefore I don't ask you for it. But fix my family's situation and bother me alone.' And I said it that crudely." On another occasion, he prayed:

Lord, what makes my cross so heavy is that others participate in it. Give me, Jesus, a cross without a Simon of Cyrene to help carry it. That's wrong. I will need your grace and your help, as in everything. With you, my God, there is no trial that frightens me. I think of a painful illness, joined, for example, to total blindness. That would be my personal cross. And audaciously, I would have the joy to shout with faith and with peace of heart from my darkness and suffering, "The Lord is my light and my salvation!" But what if the cross were boredom and sadness? I tell you, Lord, that with you I would be cheerfully sad.

Despite his intense desire to alleviate his family's dire situation, in February 1932, Escrivá turned down a promising situation. The bishop of Cuenca, a distant relative of his mother, offered to appoint him a canon of his cathedral. The position was relatively well paid and might have opened the door to further advances in an ecclesiastical career. Escrivá was convinced, however, that Madrid was the place where Opus Dei had to develop. His spiritual director agreed. Opus Dei's birth in the capital, he said, was a sign that God wanted it to develop there. Escrivá's decision to decline the offer was made all the more difficult by the fact that he still had not said anything to his family about Opus Dei and, therefore, could not give them any convincing reason for his decision.

It is not known why Escrivá had still not revealed to his family what had happened on October 2, 1928, or explained to them the significance of what he had been doing since then. Part of the

explanation may be that he had nothing external to show for his efforts. The only thing he could have told them about was the vision of October 2, and thereafter he was very reluctant to talk about that experience or other supernatural events in his life, even with members of Opus Dei.

Back among the Sick

No sooner had he left the Foundation for the Sick than Escrivá began to miss daily contact with sick and poor people. In a note taken in March 1932, which he would later incorporate into *The Way*, he wrote: "Children. The Sick. When I write these words, I feel tempted to use capitals because, for a soul in love, they are him." He felt an overwhelming desire to exercise his priestly ministry among them. In addition, he believed their prayers and sacrifices were essential for the growth of the Work.

Through the sacristan of St. Elizabeth's, he learned about the Congregation of St. Philip Neri, a group who visited and took care of the sick in the General Hospital of Madrid. On Sunday, November 8, 1931, he went for the first time with the Philippians, as they were called, to make the beds of the sick, to bathe them and cut their hair and nails, and to empty bed pans and spittoons.

Escrivá became close friends with a number of the young men who were already involved in the Philippians, including Antonio Medialdea, a shop clerk; Jenaro Lazaro, an artist; and Luis Gordon, a well-to-do industrial engineer from the south of Spain who ran a beer factory in the outskirts of Madrid. They soon began to seek spiritual direction from him. He also brought to the hospital a handful of students who were already coming to him for spiritual direction, including José Romeo, Adolfo Gómez with his brother Pedro, and José Manuel Doménech.

Spending Sunday afternoons in the hospital required great generosity on the part of the young men. In the increasingly anticlerical atmosphere of the hospital, some of the patients rudely rebuffed their services. The hospital reeked of urine, excrement, and unwashed bodies, and some of the services they performed were so repugnant that more than once they vomited after leaving

the hospital. Escrivá often later recalled an occasion when he asked Gordon to empty a jar full of the spittle of a tuberculosis patient. Gordon shuddered but picked it up and went to clean it. Noticing his repugnance, Escrivá hurried after him. When he got to the cleaning closet, he saw him with his sleeves rolled up and his hand plunged into the jar while he said softly, with a contented expression on his face, "Jesus, keep me smiling." This incident ended up in *The Way* in which Escrivá wrote: "Isn't it true, Lord, that you were greatly consoled by the childlike remark of that man who, when he felt the disconcerting effect of obedience in something unpleasant, whispered to you: 'Jesus, keep me smiling!'"

The Waters Shall Pass through the Mountains

In addition to giving personal spiritual direction to these young men, Escrivá met with them in small groups. Sometimes he would share with them his personal notes about sanctity and apostolate in the world. Other times they would make plans for expanding their little group and spreading the incipient apostolate of Opus Dei. They had nowhere to meet, so they often sat on a bench on one of Madrid's main boulevards or in a nearby park. Escrivá shared with them his ambitious dreams of a worldwide apostolate, reaching down through the centuries. This vision contrasted starkly with the reality of a handful of boys and young men sitting on a park bench with a priest who was barely thirty.

Escrivá was painfully aware of the disproportion between what he had seen on October 2, 1928, and the reality of three years later, but he found a source of confidence in prayer. In mid-December 1931, he wrote in his personal notes:

Yesterday I had dinner at the Guevara's home. While I was there, without making prayer, I found myself saying, like other times, "*Inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae*" [Through the midst of the mountains, the waters shall pass] (Ps 104: 10). I believe that I have had those words on my tongue other times these days for no special reason, but I gave them no importance. Yesterday I said them with such stress that I felt

impelled to write them down. I understood them as a promise that the Work of God will overcome all obstacles. The waters of its apostolates will pass through all the problems that may arise.

He did not tell anyone other than his spiritual director, Fr. Sanchez, about these experiences, but they gave him a buoyant confidence that he radiated to those around him. His explanations of what lay ahead in the apostolate of the Work were not "vague, imprecise generalities" but, as a future archbishop of Valencia who met him in 1932 recalls, "something perfectly real and concrete." Another future bishop, who met Escrivá in 1936, had the same impression. He recalls that he was struck by the "clear, precise idea that [Escrivá] had of the Work, not only as an apostolic undertaking that was being built day by day, but as something very well defined projected into the future." It was explicable only in part, he concluded, as a product of Escrivá's thought and imagination:

It was impossible to explain fully the clarity of the idea if Josemaría didn't also have a special light from our Lord. This precise definition of the goals and means could not be simply the fruit of his imagination. Furthermore, his vision of the future didn't have the pretentious, exaggerated, or vain tone that so often characterizes merely human plans. Rather, it had the simplicity, naturalness, and humility that characterized him. This also convinced me that I was seeing something out of the ordinary. The security with which he spoke about the future of the Work could not come simply from his thinking or from things that occurred to him. Evidently there was something more.

Somoano and the Monday Conferences

On January 2, 1932, Fr. Veá-Murguía took Escrivá to meet a friend of his, Fr. José María Somoano, a young chaplain at the King's Hospital. In preparation for the visit, Escrivá asked several

people to pray and offer sacrifices for an intention of his. As soon as he explained Opus Dei to him, Somoano asked to join. Somoano wrote in his diary a brief summary of their meeting: "I was enthused. I promised him good connections for the Work of God—sick people who pray. As for myself, enthused and ready for everything." Somoano confided to one of the patients that he had been so happy about joining Opus Dei that he was unable to sleep that night.

Somoano immediately began to ask the patients in the hospital to pray and offer their sufferings for a very special intention. A young woman named María Ignacia García Escobar, who was suffering from tuberculosis, was so impressed with Somoano's cheerfulness and enthusiasm that she recorded in her diary what Somoano had told her:

María, we have to pray a great deal for an intention that will be for the good of everyone. This petition is not a question of a few days. It is a universal good that needs prayers and sacrifices now and tomorrow and forever. I'm asking you to pray for it without ceasing, because it is very beautiful.

Before the week was out, Somoano found another new member for Opus Dei, his friend José María Vegas, a dynamic and optimistic thirty-year-old priest from the diocese of Madrid. Like Somoano, as soon as he learned about Opus Dei, Vegas asked to join.

On Monday, February 22, 1932, the half dozen or so priests who had joined Opus Dei met for the first of a series of meetings that Escrivá called the Monday Conferences. These meetings gave Escrivá the opportunity to explain more fully the nature of the vocation to the Work and to forge bonds among the participants. They talked frequently about future apostolic undertakings and dreamed of the day when Opus Dei would begin its first external activity. Escrivá believed that day was not far off. In February 1932, he wrote in his personal notes, "Jesus, I see that your Work can begin soon."

Despite the small size of the group and its lack of any external

activity, or even a meeting place of its own, the Monday Conferences were vibrant and enthusiastic. The participants came away from them charged with Escrivá's faith in the future of the Work. María Ignacia Escobar observed that when Somoano "returned on Mondays from the spiritual meetings of our Work, it was sufficient to look at him to see how satisfied and content he was." Nonetheless, it was not easy for most of the participants to grasp what Escrivá was explaining to them. Although they were enthused, they did not fully understand Escrivá's message.

The First Women in Opus Dei

The apostolate of Opus Dei with women had to overcome formidable obstacles. Escrivá saw Opus Dei as directed to both married and single people of every social condition and educational background. His early experiences convinced him, however, that to get things started he would need people pledged to celibacy and with sufficient education not only to understand what Opus Dei was about but also to organize it and explain its message and mission to others. For this reason, after some initial efforts to recruit workmen and clerks, he decided to focus his apostolate, for the moment, on college students and recent graduates who could answer a call to apostolic celibacy in the midst of the world. In the case of women, however, it would not be practical to focus only on college students and recent graduates. The number of women in Spanish universities had more than doubled in a decade, but there were still very few.

Escrivá was convinced that the first women members of Opus Dei needed to be celibate, but that also presented problems. Single Spanish women in the 1930s had little independence and were generally expected to live either with their parents or with a married brother or sister, confining their activities largely to the home.

Escrivá's activities gave him only limited contacts with women who might be able to understand Opus Dei and answer a call to it. His principal source of contacts was the confessional, where he spent long hours hearing confessions and giving spiritual direction or simply praying and reading as he waited for penitents. It was

there he met the first woman to join Opus Dei. Her name was Carmen Cuervo, and she held a responsible position in the Ministry of Labor, something unusual for a woman at the time. As soon as Escrivá met her in November 1931, he wrote to Zorzano, "I think the King has sent me a soul to begin the woman's branch." A few month's later, precisely on February 14, 1932, the second anniversary of the founding of the woman's branch, Cuervo joined Opus Dei.

Meanwhile, Escobar was offering her sufferings for the intention Somoano had asked her to pray for. Her suffering intensified, including frequent high fevers and intense stomach pains, and she was rarely able to get out of bed. One day she said to Somoano, "The intention you asked me to pray for must be very important because, since you asked me to pray and offer things for it, Jesus has been very lavish with me. At night when the pain doesn't let me sleep, I pass the time reminding our Lord repeatedly about your intention."

A few weeks later, Fr. Somoano explained Opus Dei to Escobar and asked if she would like to be part of it. She accepted joyfully. Physically, her situation was bleak. The doctors had given up hope of her recovery, and what lay ahead was a prolonged and painful death. But in the light of the spirit of Opus Dei, her illness and suffering took on new meaning. They were not a cross to be borne reluctantly but the work God had in store for her, the path that would lead her to God and would permit her to carry out a fruitful apostolate. Hers was, as Escrivá put it, a vocation of expiation. After her would come thousands of women who would work in a vast variety of professions and jobs. Lying in a hospital bed, she could help lay the foundations of Opus Dei and prepare the way for those who would come afterward.

In talking with her, Somoano insisted on the importance of sanctity. "We don't want, and we never will want, numbers for numbers' sake," he told her. "Holy souls; souls that are intimately united to Jesus; souls set afire in the flames of divine love; great souls!" "We have to lay the foundations well. To do so, we have to try to make sure that the foundations are solid granite blocks. . . . First of all, the foundations. The rest will come later."

A few days after Escobar joined Opus Dei, Cuervo went to visit her in the hospital. It was the first time that two women members of Opus Dei were together. At the next Monday Conference, Escrivá proposed saying the Church's solemn hymn of thanksgiving, the *Te Deum*.

The women's branch of Opus Dei had taken its first steps, but the path ahead would be hard. In addition to the difficulty of finding women who could grasp his vision and were generous enough to embrace it, Escrivá faced the problem of transmitting to them the spirit of Opus Dei. He was a very young priest and therefore reluctant to spend hours working closely with young women in an effort to form them. He decided, therefore, to entrust most of this task to Fr. Norberto, who was considerably older. Time would show, however, that Fr. Norberto had not really grasped the secular spirit of Opus Dei. He transmitted to the few women Escrivá entrusted to his care something closer to the spirit of a religious order than to that of Opus Dei.

More Government Attacks on the Church

As Opus Dei's activities with women were struggling to get started, the government began to adopt legislation and regulations to implement the antireligious provisions of the constitution. In January 1932, it dissolved the Society of Jesus and confiscated its property. In February, it introduced civil marriage and divorce and removed the crucifixes from all classrooms in public schools. Soon it abolished chaplains in state-run hospitals. Another decree provided that anyone who had not declared, in a notarized document, that he wanted a religious burial was to be given a purely secular funeral service.

Especially in small towns, radically anticlerical town officials took delight in prohibiting processions, the ringing of church bells, and other popular forms of religious activities. Even in cases in which a notarized declaration had been made requesting a Catholic funeral, municipal authorities often frustrated the deceased's desires by exercising their authority to regulate or prohibit all external religious ceremonies such as funeral processions. Such

measures might seem to have been relatively minor irritants, but they adversely affected many ordinary Catholics, for whom such religious ceremonies were part of the fabric of life. Dramatic measures, like the declaration that Spain was no longer a Catholic country, might have been quickly forgotten; but Republican attempts to confine religion to the private sphere had an ongoing impact on the daily lives of many Catholics and went far to turn them definitively against the Republic.

Deaths in the Family

The elimination of hospital chaplains directly affected Fr. Somoano. At the end of April, he received official notice that his position had been terminated by the recent budget act and that he could no longer live in the hospital. Somoano stalled as long as he could, turning a deaf ear to repeated orders to leave and even to open threats against his life from some of the more radical anticlerical members of the hospital staff.

Finally, on May 15, 1932, he concluded that he had no choice but to leave the hospital and accept a position in a nearby parish. He was determined, however, to continue visiting the hospital to celebrate Mass on Sundays, to bring Holy Communion, to hear confessions, and to administer the anointing of the sick. Despite pressure to leave immediately, Somoano defiantly remained until June 3, when he was finally expelled from the chaplain's quarters at the hospital. Even after his expulsion from the chaplain's quarters, the overt hostility and threats of some of the hospital personnel did not deter him from visiting the hospital regularly. In his notebook, he wrote: "What will I do? I put myself in our Lord's hands so that he may do with me whatever he wants! The Lord is my life's refuge. What shall I fear?"

A few weeks later, Somoano, who before joining Opus Dei had offered himself to God as a victim for Spain, fell violently ill with severe stomach cramps and vomiting. The symptoms pointed to arsenic poisoning, perhaps administered by one of the anticlerical members of the hospital staff. On July 16, 1932, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, to whom he was very devoted, Somoano died,

an early victim of the hatred of religion that would lead thousands of priests and religious to their deaths during the Spanish Civil War.

In the notice he wrote to inform other members of the Work of Somoano's death, Escrivá said:

Our Lord Jesus sent him to us with a double predilection, predilection for him and for the Work. He sent him so that our brother might fill out his spiritual life, setting his heart more and more ablaze in raging fires of Faith and Love, and so that the Work might have someone constantly concerned for us near the Blessed Trinity and near Mary Immaculate. . . . I know that his petitions will greatly move the Merciful Heart of Jesus when he prays for us madmen—mad like him, and . . . like Jesus! We will obtain the abundant graces we need to fulfill the will of God.

Fr. Vegas had been introduced to Opus Dei by Fr. Somoano. Like Somoano, he had offered his life to God for Spain prior to joining Opus Dei. Writing to Escrivá about his reaction to the news of Somoano's death, he said:

Alone before the tabernacle, I wept, and then I asked Jesus if he had accepted the offering I made before binding myself, as you very well say, with another obligation and offering. And Jesus . . . responded: "How could I not accept your offering! But it is more pleasing to me that . . . you immolate yourself with prayer, sacrifice, work, and submission for my Work, which I love in a special way. I have taken Somoano to heaven precisely for my Work, so that he intercede for it."

Although Escrivá was convinced that the Work would benefit from Somoano's prayers from heaven, his loss was a heavy blow. Somoano was an extraordinarily pious and zealous priest. Among the priests who had joined the Work, he seemed to be the one who best understood its spirit and goals. He would have been a great help in its development.

After Somoano's death, Escrivá volunteered to take his place in

the hospital, undeterred by the danger that he might be the next victim of sectarian violence. He continued to visit the hospital regularly even after the local parish priest, two teachers, and a nurse were shot in a wave of anti-Catholic violence that engulfed the area.

Another member of Opus Dei, Luis Gordon, died a few months after Somoano. Escrivá had met Gordon through his work in the hospital with the Philippicians, and he had recently joined Opus Dei. During the summer of 1932, he contracted a serious lung disease. Although he was little more than thirty years old, he died on November 5, 1932. He had discussed with Escrivá making Opus Dei the heir of his sizeable estate, but Escrivá had advised him not to do so.

Escrivá was with Gordon in his final hours and later described him in the death notice he drafted for the Work's members as a "good model." "Obedient, very discreet, charitable and even prodigal, humble, mortified, and penitent . . . , a man of the Eucharist and of prayer, very devoted to Holy Mary and St. Thérèse, the Little Flower . . . a father to the workers in his factory, who have wept sincerely for his death."

Escrivá consoled himself with the thought that Gordon would be a powerful intercessor in heaven, but the loss was painful. In addition to his virtues and dedication, Gordon could have provided the money Opus Dei needed to acquire a place of its own and to begin its external apostolic activities. The death notice concluded: "Our Great King Christ Jesus has wanted to take to himself the two best prepared vocations, so that we might place our confidence not in anything on this earth, not even in anyone's personal virtues, but solely and exclusively in his most loving Providence. The Most Merciful Love has cast another seed into the furrow . . . and what hopes we place in its fertility!"

In the Madrid Jail

In August 1932, a young member of Opus Dei, Adolfo Gómez, and another university student with whom Escrivá had worked at the Philippicians, José Manuel Doménech, were arrested for their

part in a coup attempt led by the conservative general José Sanjurjo. The abortive coup was poorly planned and executed. The government had ample warning about the plot and had no trouble in suppressing the attempt. The uprising gave the government an opportunity to crack down on opposition, closing more than one hundred newspapers and arresting several hundred conspirators. It also gave rise to a new wave of attacks on convents and church buildings, although not on the scale of the Burning of Convents in May 1931.

As soon as he heard that Gómez had been arrested, Escrivá set out to find him. He located him promptly and began to make daily visits to the jail dressed in his cassock, despite the danger of being persecuted for visiting political prisoners. Escrivá did not just talk to the few prisoners he already knew but reached out to others. He urged them to consider frequently that God is our father and that he arranges all things for our good, even the threat of severe punishment and death that hung over them. He also suggested that they try to make use of the many idle hours in the day to continue their studies, helping them see the supernatural value of using their time well.

After a few months, the jailed right-wing conspirators were joined by a large number of Anarchists who had been arrested for political crimes during an attempted revolution in the south of Spain. The two groups were archrivals. They were housed in separate sections of the jail, but they shared the same patio during recreation periods. The young right-wing conspirators were infuriated by daily contact with people whom they considered bitter enemies of their faith as well as of their political ideals. Escrivá, however, urged them to reach out to the Anarchists and to make friends with them. They heeded his advice and the two groups ended up playing soccer, not against each other, but in teams made up partly of students and partly of Anarchists. One of the students who played goalie with two Anarchist defenders recalled that he "never played a cleaner and less violent soccer game." Even after they were freed from prison, some of the students stayed in touch with the Anarchists, a few of whom eventually returned to the Church.

The Fruits of a Retreat

On October 3, 1932, the day after the fourth anniversary of Opus Dei's foundation, Escrivá began a retreat in the Carmelite Convent in Segovia, where St. John of the Cross is buried. There was no preaching or conferences during the retreat, just a week spent in silence and prayer.

The central theme of Escrivá's retreat was his calling to Opus Dei. "God does not need me. [My calling] is a most loving mercy of his Heart. The Work would go forward without me, because it is his. He would raise up another, or others, in the same way as he found substitutes for Eli, for Saul, for Judas. . . ." Nonetheless, Escrivá knew that he had been chosen to found Opus Dei, and he renewed his resolution to dedicate all his energies to answering God's call.

He set himself a demanding plan that included an hour of mental prayer in the morning and in the evening, a half hour of thanksgiving after Mass, rosary, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, reading of the New Testament and of other spiritual books, examination of conscience at noon and in the evening, and recitation of the prayers he had composed for the members of Opus Dei.

His plan of sacrifices was no less demanding, including a complete fast one day a week, not eating sweets, and not drinking water except during the Mass. He also practiced the traditional mortifications of using the disciplines—a whip of cords to which he sometimes added bits of metal—and the cilice, a modern version of the traditional hair shirt. In addition, he resolved to mortify his curiosity and the other internal senses by not "asking questions out of curiosity" and by not "complaining about anything to anyone unless it is to seek spiritual direction."

He also decided to sleep on the floor three nights a week. He allowed himself so little sleep that often he found it very difficult to get up in the morning. In a note to Fr. Sánchez, he said:

I am so inclined to laziness that the desire to please Jesus doesn't move me to get up on time in the morning. Don't

laugh, but I have to fool myself saying, "Later on you'll lie down for a little while during the day." And when I'm walking to St. Elizabeth's before six in the morning, I frequently scoff at this dead weight that I carry with me, and I say to it: "Forget it, my little donkey. You're not going to lie down again until night."

Escrivá regularly consulted his spiritual director about what mortifications he should practice. After his retreat in 1933, for instance, he submitted his plan of mortifications to Fr. Sánchez, together with a note in which he said: "Our Lord is undoubtedly asking me, Father, to step up my penance. When I am faithful to him in this matter, the Work seems to take on new impetus." In his personal notes, he frequently complained that Fr. Sánchez would not allow him to practice mortification as vigorously as he wished, but even within the restrictions his director imposed, his penance was extraordinarily rigorous.

The Work of Saints Raphael, Michael, and Gabriel

In the course of the retreat, Escrivá decided how to structure the incipient apostolates of Opus Dei, which, although small, already embraced a broad spectrum of people. From this point on, he would speak of three works of apostolate, entrusted to each of the three archangels mentioned in Scripture. The spiritual formation of students and other young people would be entrusted to St. Raphael and to the Apostle St. John. The formation of the members of Opus Dei who had embraced a vocation to celibacy in the midst of the world would be entrusted to St. Michael and the Apostle St. Peter. Finally, the apostolate with married people and the formation of the married members of Opus Dei would be entrusted to St. Gabriel and to the Apostle St. Paul.

All the future activities of Opus Dei would fit into one of these three categories, which Escrivá would call the Work of St. Raphael, the Work of St. Michael, and the Work of St. Gabriel. He had been thinking of founding an association of young people, with the name of the Pious Union of Holy Mary of Hope, akin to

the Holy Name Society or to the Legion of Mary. Before going on retreat, he had talked over the matter with Fr. Potius, who temporarily acted as his spiritual director after the dissolution of the Society of Jesus made it impossible to continue seeing Fr. Sánchez. They had agreed that it would be better not to form any association but simply to give formation to young people—perhaps through an academy like the Cicuéndez Academy, where Escrivá was teaching. During the retreat, he reaffirmed this conviction.

Men and Women of Prayer

As a spiritual director, Escrivá strove to help members of the Work and others who sought his advice to become men and women of prayer and sacrifice, who enjoyed a deep personal relationship with Christ in prayer. He wanted them to realize that they were also called to help their friends and colleagues to live lives of prayer. On November 14, 1931, he wrote: “The Work of God is going to make men of God, men of interior life, men of prayer and sacrifice. The apostolate of the members will be an overflow of their life ‘within’: they will give from their superabundance.”

Escrivá encouraged those who came to him for spiritual direction to practice mental prayer, no matter how difficult or apparently unsuccessful it might seem. The tone of his advice is reflected in a letter to Zorzano:

Be completely open and confident with Jesus. Tell him your things. . . . If occasionally (or many times) you are dry and arid before the Tabernacle, not knowing what to say to Jesus . . . stand guard for him. Persevere for the full time you usually spend in prayer, without shortening it even a minute. Be faithful, like a little dog at its master’s feet. . . . That day you will undoubtedly have merited more by your perseverance, and you will have given greater consolation to God.

Late in 1932, Escrivá ran off on a primitive mimeograph machine 250 short points for meditation, primarily taken from his personal notes and based on his own experiences and those of the

people who were coming to him for spiritual direction. He distributed the text to the people with whom he was in personal contact. In 1934, he would revise and expand this collection of points for meditation and arrange for it to be privately published under the title *Spiritual Considerations*. Immediately after the Spanish Civil War, he published a further revised and expanded version under the title *The Way*. The book would eventually become a best-seller, with more than four million copies sold in more than forty languages.

In advising those who came to him for spiritual direction, Escrivá insisted that they embrace Christ's cross and live a life of sacrifice. He did not, however, suggest that they imitate the rigorous penances he practiced personally. Primarily he emphasized a loving and cheerful acceptance of the difficulties of the day and the sacrifices required to fulfill their obligations. "Often," he told them, "a smile is the best mortification." When he did urge them to undertake some corporal mortification, the practices he suggested were moderate.

The asceticism Escrivá advised was what he called a "smiling asceticism," which again reflected his own practice. The severe penance he practiced personally did not make him gloomy or ill-tempered. On the contrary, people who met him were struck by his joy and good humor. A careful observer might surmise that suffering had entered his life, but he never spoke to anyone other than his spiritual director about the penances he performed or about the difficulties he and his family were encountering. His smile was quick and infectious and his humor spontaneous and warm.

He told the members of the Work that they should be happy and cheerful, not despite the problems and sufferings they might have to endure and the penances they performed, but because of them. His faith led him to see God's loving hand behind suffering and to find in it the Cross of Christ. Finding the Cross was, he once wrote, "to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ, and therefore to be a son of God." And to be identified with Christ and a son of God was a source of profound happiness no matter how great the suffering. "Accepting the will of God wholeheartedly,"

he wrote, "is a sure way of finding joy and peace—happiness in the Cross. Then we realize that Christ's yoke is sweet and that his burden is not heavy."

Escrivá's Personal Situation

Escrivá had been thinking about trying to win a law professorship as a way of supporting himself and his family. During his retreat in 1932, he realized that the time this would require was incompatible with his calling to dedicate himself to founding Opus Dei. God, he concluded, was asking him "always to be solely and exclusively a priest: a father director of souls, hidden, buried alive, for Love." "For me to seek a secular position . . . would be to doubt the divinity of the Work, which is the point of my life on earth." Nonetheless, he resolved to try to complete his doctorates in law and theology, because he thought the degrees would better equip him to carry out Opus Dei. Despite the slow progress he had made since coming to Madrid, he was determined to complete both degrees within the next year.

Developing Opus Dei took almost all his time, and the need to support his family made it difficult to pay the fees associated with obtaining the degrees. Things, therefore, went much slower than he had hoped. Four years later, when the Spanish Civil War broke out, he had made little progress on the theology degree. He had completed most of the course work for the law degree and had made some progress on collecting material for a dissertation on the ordination of priests of mixed blood in the Spanish empire, but during the civil war, he lost all his notes and had to start over. He chose a completely different topic, the quasi-episcopal jurisdiction of the abess of the monastery of Las Huelgas. He did not actually receive a doctorate in law until December 1939. Escrivá had to wait until 1955 for a doctorate in theology from the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome.

If he was not going to be a professor, he would have to find some other source of income for his family. Their financial position was deteriorating. Despite the bleakness of the situation, he concluded that the solution to his family's economic problems lay

in abandoning himself more confidently in God's arms: "The things of God have to be done in a divine way. I am God's. I want to be God's. When I really am, he will immediately take care of this, rewarding my faith and my love and the considerable silent sacrifice of my brother and sister. Let us allow our Lord to act."

Escrivá soon had an opportunity to test his resolve. Angel Herrera, the national president of Catholic Action and editor of the influential newspaper *El Debate*, wanted to open a center in Madrid to train outstanding young priests from all over the country who could direct the growth of Catholic Action in their dioceses. He invited Escrivá to become the spiritual director of the center. The offer must have been tempting. The position would have brought with it great prestige in clerical circles and would have brought Escrivá to the attention of the Spanish hierarchy, which was closely following the development of Catholic Action. In addition, it would have been an opportunity to influence the development of Catholic Action throughout Spain.

Escrivá declined the offer because it would distract him from his effort to develop Opus Dei. He told Herrera, "I appreciate the offer, but I can't accept. I have to follow the path . . . to which God calls me." Catholic Action was something quite different from what Escrivá was trying to do. It involved lay people taking part in and supporting the official apostolic activities of the hierarchy. Opus Dei, by contrast, envisioned lay men and women carrying out apostolate primarily in the midst of the world, in virtue of their baptism, without any special mandate from the hierarchy. As Escrivá wrote in another context in 1932:

We must reject the prejudice that ordinary faithful must limit themselves to helping the clergy in ecclesiastical apostolates. There is no reason why the apostolate of lay people should always be a simple participation in the hierarchical apostolate. They have a duty of doing apostolate, not because they receive a canonical mission, but because they are part of the Church. They carry out this mission through their professions or jobs, with their families, their colleagues, and their friends.


When he returned home from the interview with Herrera, Escrivá tried to soften the impact of his decision to turn down the offer by suggesting that something else might come up in the future. His thirteen-year-old brother, Santiago, responded, "I hope that they give you something that does great good to souls but is also well paid."

* * *

The reality Escrivá faced in 1932 stood in sharp contrast to his ambitious plans for Opus Dei's apostolates. He had almost nothing to show for all his prayer, sacrifice, and work. The number of people following him was sadly reduced. Some had left Madrid. Others had suffered "illnesses and tribulations," abandoning the Work as a result. And some had simply grown tired of following him because they "wanted to but without really wanting to." Of the few who were still with him at the end of 1932, only Isidoro Zorzano would stay the course.

Escrivá was acutely aware of the contrast between the reality of his situation and the breathtaking mission to which he felt called. In a note, he described himself as a "very poor and sinful instrument who — inspired by you, God—was planning the conquest of the entire world for his God." Nonetheless, he felt "sure, because I am your son, that the Work will rise up soon in keeping with your inspirations." In fact, 1933 would witness developments that, although unremarkable at the time, in retrospect seem to mark the beginning of Opus Dei's growth.

Laying the Foundations

 1933

The First St. Raphael Circles

The beginning of 1933 brought with it hopeful developments. A year earlier, Escrivá had met a young medical student named Juan Jiménez Vargas.* On January 4, 1933, he explained his apostolic projects to him, specifically his plans for giving religious formation to young people. Vargas promptly convinced a number of his friends to help teach catechism in the Los Pinos neighborhood, where Escrivá had recently offered to help the nuns with catechism classes for poor children. Soon Vargas and a number of his friends went with Escrivá on visits to the destitute sick in hospitals or in their homes.

Escrivá invited Vargas to attend a series of classes of religious formation. The first class took place on January 21, 1933, in the reception room of Porta Coeli, a home for street urchins, where Escrivá helped out from time to time. Although Escrivá had invited quite a few young men to attend the class and had prayed for them, only Vargas and two other medical students came. After the class, Escrivá took the three young men to the chapel for Benediction. Years later he recalled the scene. Lifting up the monstrance to give the Benediction, he saw “not three, nor thirty, nor three

* Although formal Spanish family names are composites made up of the father’s family name followed by the mother’s family name, in daily life most people use only the first part of their family name. Some individuals, however, regularly use both names or just their mother’s name, particularly when the father’s name is the Spanish equivalent of Smith or Jones. This is the case of Jiménez Vargas, who will be referred to as Jiménez Vargas or Vargas, because that is how he usually referred to himself and what his friends usually called him. Similar treatment will be given to González Barredo and Fernández Vallespin, who are mentioned later in this chapter.

hundred, [but] three hundred thousand, many millions, many millions." One of the three never returned, but the other two did.

The January 21, 1933, session was the first of what Escrivá sometimes called "St. Raphael circles": short classes of practical Christian formation in which young men and women could learn to put into practice natural and supernatural virtues, to become men and women of prayer, and to live a more Christian life. Although Escrivá had been working with young people since the foundation of Opus Dei, he considered this first St. Raphael circle the beginning of the St. Raphael Work, that is, of the organized apostolate of Opus Dei with young people.

New Members

Vargas not only continued attending the circles but soon asked to become a member of Opus Dei. He was followed by Jenaro Lázaro, an artist who earned his living working for the railroads and whom Escrivá had met through the Philippians. A few weeks later, José María González Barredo joined Opus Dei. Escrivá had noticed Barredo in 1931 while celebrating Mass in the church of the Foundation for the Sick. He had asked him to pray for an intention of his. The intention was that God would grant Barredo a vocation to the Work. When they first met, Barredo had finished a degree in chemistry and was completing advanced studies at the university. A short time later, however, he took a position teaching science in a school in the distant province of Jaen, and Escrivá lost track of him.

In February 1933, Barredo returned to Madrid to work on his doctorate at the Rockefeller Institute. When he saw Escrivá on the street one day, he tried to avoid him because he feared that Escrivá might try to interest him in some parish activity unconnected with his professional work. He wanted to serve God, but he also wanted to pursue his profession. Escrivá, however, came over to greet him and insisted that they get together to talk. When they met later that afternoon, Barredo realized that Opus Dei, as described by Escrivá, was what he had unconsciously been searching for.

The young chemist felt strongly attracted to Opus Dei but did not want to take such a major step in his life without first seeking advice. He proposed consulting a religious he knew, and Escrivá readily assented. The priest discouraged him from joining something that was just getting under way. "After all," he said, "it's better to work in a library that's already organized than one that's just getting started." Barredo thought that consideration was irrelevant. The question was whether the Work was what God had in mind for him. Even looking at things from a purely natural point of view, by organizing "the library" one could contribute to the work of many who would come later. Barredo visited Escrivá again on February 11, 1933, feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, and joined Opus Dei.

Another vocation came in the fall of 1933. Escrivá met Ricardo Fernández Vallespín on May 14, 1933. Vallespín, a bright architecture student, was tutoring José Romeo at his home one day when Escrivá came to visit. Although their first meeting was brief, it left a deep impression on Vallespín, who wrote in his diary: "I met a young priest today who is enthusiastic and full of love of God. I don't know why, but I think he is going to have a big impact on my life."

Escrivá and Vallespín met a second time a few weeks later at Escrivá's home. Two of Vallespín's brothers were in jail for political crimes, so he was struck by the fact that Escrivá spoke about "things of the soul," not about politics. Before he left, Escrivá gave him a book called the *Story of the Passion*. On a blank page in the front of the book, he wrote this dedication: "+ Madrid, May 29, 1933. May you look for Christ. May you find Christ. May you love Christ."

During the summer, they had almost no contact, because Vallespín was busy with other things. Toward the end of the summer, Vallespín was laid up with a severe attack of rheumatism. After he recovered, he went several times to Escrivá for spiritual direction. On October 4, Escrivá explained Opus Dei to him, stressing its divine origin and the fact that it was not a response to the difficult situation of the Church in Spain but rather was called to carry out a mission through the centuries and throughout the

world. Escrivá emphasized that, to carry out this mission, Opus Dei needed people in love with Christ who would sanctify their work and be nailed to Christ's cross in the midst of the world.

Vallespín was a practicing, but not particularly devout, Catholic. At no stage in his life had he ever received Holy Communion three days in a row. Nonetheless, Escrivá's words struck a deep chord in him. Up to then, he had never thought of giving himself completely to God, but now, as he recalled years later, he said simply, "I want to be part of that," because he didn't recall the name "Work of God." Vargas, Barredo, and Vallespín all persevered in Opus Dei and, together with Zorzano and Escrivá himself, formed the initial nucleus of Opus Dei in the coming years.

Courage and Dedication

In addition to giving personal spiritual direction to the members of the Work and others, Escrivá organized classes and informal get-togethers. These were held in the apartment on Martínez Campos Street, which he had rented for his family in December 1932. Holding the meetings in his home, where his mother, sister, and brother were often present, made it easier for Escrivá to develop a family spirit among those who attended. Opus Dei became, in a real sense, an extension of his own family.

For the family, however, this arrangement represented a considerable burden. Not only was the peace and quiet of their home frequently disrupted by the arrival of a small troop of students, but their meager provisions were often consumed providing refreshments to the guests. "Josemaría's boys eat everything," the fourteen-year-old Santiago was heard to complain. Escrivá's mother, Doña Dolores, and his sister Carmen, however, cheerfully welcomed the guests and treated them with such warmth and affection that the young members of the Work, who referred to Escrivá as "Father," soon began to call them "Grandmother" and "Aunt Carmen."

Escrivá invited the members of the Work and other young people who gathered around him to teach catechism in the poor neighborhoods of Madrid and to visit the sick in the hospitals. The

increasingly violent anticlerical atmosphere in both the hospitals and the shantytowns where they taught catechism made the work hard and at times dangerous. In May 1933, a band of men attacked the school in Los Pinos, where Escrivá and the students taught catechism on Sundays. As the men poured gasoline on the doors, a group of local women urged them on, shouting, "Don't let anyone escape alive! There are eight [nuns]! Kill them all!" The police arrived and dispersed the mob before any damage was done, but only the more courageous and generous students were willing to continue teaching. Less dramatic incidents in the hospitals, combined with the nauseating stench and filth they often endured, also proved too much for the faint-hearted and less generous. Contact with misery, ignorance, and suffering taught those who stayed to live charity, forget about their own needs, and dedicate themselves to others.

In addition to accompanying the students when they went to the hospitals, Escrivá continued to dedicate many hours to visiting the sick and administering the sacraments to them. His ardent faith, optimism, and good humor helped to bring joy to those who had no earthly reasons to be happy. One of the nuns who worked in King's Hospital recalled that the patients "awaited his visits with joy and hope." "I have seen them," she said, "accept pain and death with a fervor and self-giving that inspired devotion in those of us who looked after them." Another nun recalled that, thanks to Escrivá's help, "the patients who died in the hospital were not afraid of death. They looked it in the eye, and even received it with joy." His infectious joy moved some women to begin to take care of their appearance again out of consideration for the other women in the ward, doing their hair and using the makeup that they had abandoned in their discouragement and despair.

Escrivá was aware of the hostility of some of the hospital personnel and the possibility that he might suffer the same fate as Fr. Somoano. He also faced the danger of contracting an infection from hearing confessions of so many tuberculosis patients. Nonetheless, he threw himself into priestly care of the patients and repeatedly urged them to pray and offer their sufferings for his intentions.

Plan of Life

While he worked to find people who could understand Opus Dei's message of holiness and apostolate in the midst of the world, Escrivá struggled to define more sharply the outlines of what God wanted of Opus Dei's members. From the October 2 vision, it was clear that members of Opus Dei were called to a "daily encounter with Christ . . . in the midst of the most material things of the earth, . . . to serve him *in and from* the ordinary material and secular activities of human life."

For this they would need an intense interior life of union with God through prayer, sacrifice, and sanctification of their work and other activities. They would need to read the Gospel, to attend Mass, to meditate, and to practice penance, but not separate and apart from their work and other activities. They had to avoid "the temptation . . . of living a kind of double life: on the one hand, an interior life, a life of relation with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social, and family life, full of small earthly realities." Rather, their interior life, their practices of piety, had to lead them to sanctify their daily lives.

The question was how to translate this ideal into practice. What practices of piety should Opus Dei members perform? How could they integrate them into the fabric of their daily lives so that their lives would be single, unified wholes, based on love of God, rather than a schizophrenic mix of piety and ordinary everyday life? On the basis of his own personal experience and that of the people to whom he gave spiritual direction, Escrivá struggled to outline a basic structure of interior life for the members of the Work. For example, it was obvious from the beginning that the members of the Work would need to read the Sacred Scripture, but it was not clear what form that reading should take. At first, Escrivá thought it would be desirable for them to all read the same passage on any given day. However, he later opted for simply recommending that each member spend a few minutes every day reading one of the Gospels or another book of the New Testament.

In February 1933, he decided the time had come to write out a "plan of life," a flexible set of practices of spiritual life that the

members would commit themselves to trying to fulfill. This plan included not only times dedicated exclusively to prayer (such as the rosary and mental prayer) but also practices of piety, such as giving thanks to God or saying aspirations to our Lady, interspersed throughout the day. They would help Opus Dei members to discover, in the midst of their work and other activities, "something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations" of work and family life.

The plan of life Escrivá proposed was designed to help Opus Dei members to "seek God out and speak with him, lovingly contemplating him in the midst of the effort of . . . ordinary work and their earthly concerns, which are purified and raised to the supernatural order." The practices of piety Escrivá recommended, and which he often referred to as "the norms of our plan of life" or simply "the norms," were not novel. With the exception of the brief set of prayers he had written for the members of the Work to recite each day, the practices he established were all common features of Catholic piety. Indeed, even the set of prayers he wrote for the members was drawn almost entirely from texts of Scripture and liturgical prayers.

What was novel about the plan was its goal. It was structured to help people who were committed to a serious personal search for holiness encounter God in the midst of the world. By diligently fulfilling their professional, family, civic, and social responsibilities in the "service of God and of all mankind," they could "sanctify their everyday life." "There is just one life," Escrivá said, "made of flesh and spirit. And this life has to become holy and filled with God, in both soul and body. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things." For this reason, Escrivá listed work and study among the means Opus Dei members should use in their effort to achieve holiness, in addition to attendance at Mass and recitation of the rosary.

New Trials

Escrivá's ability to remain in Madrid depended on the special status of St. Elizabeth's convent as a royal foundation. In March

1933, however, all royal foundations in Madrid became subject to the normal rules of the archdiocese of Madrid. For a time it seemed that Escrivá might be forced to leave Madrid, just as he was beginning to make some progress in developing *Opus Dei*. But in June 1933, thanks to his friendship with Fr. Moran, the vicar general of Madrid, and to the support of Fr. Poveda, he was able to renew his faculties to administer the sacraments and to preach in Madrid. Even though the problem was solved for the moment, his situation remained unstable.

From the time of the foundation, Escrivá had never had any doubt about the divine origin of *Opus Dei*. His spiritual director, Fr. Postius, had warned him at the beginning of 1932 that at some point he would undergo the trial of uncertainty. That occurred during a retreat in June 1933. Escrivá recorded what happened:

I was alone in a balcony of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, trying to pray before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance. For a moment and for no particular reason—there are none—this very bitter thought came into my mind: “What if it is all a lie, an illusion of yours, and you are wasting your time and, what is worse, making so many others waste theirs?”

Escrivá responded immediately with complete detachment, offering God what he loved best. “If it is not yours,” he prayed, “destroy it. If it is yours, reassure me.” The trial, Escrivá wrote, “lasted only a few seconds, but what suffering!” God responded to his generous offering with renewed assurance. “Immediately I felt confirmed in the truth about his will concerning the Work.”

Escrivá also suffered due to the deteriorating condition of María Ignacia Escobar, the tuberculosis patient who had joined *Opus Dei* in the spring of 1932. The disease was no longer confined to her lungs but was eating away her bones and her organs. Escrivá spoke to her about death and assured her that she would work more effectively for *Opus Dei* from heaven than on this earth. He even suggested a number of intentions that she could ask of Jesus and Mary when she got to heaven, especially for vocations.

Escobar not only kept her peace despite terrible pain, but, as Escrivá wrote, "She contemplated death with the joy of someone who knows that when she dies she will go to her Father." "I know," she wrote in a letter, "that I am suffering through Jesus and for Jesus. Are there any words on earth to compare with these? Blessed is the soul to whom our Lord grants such a favor if it knows how to take advantage of it! Help me with your prayers to achieve the most intimate union with Jesus. To love him madly is my only ambition on this earth. If he doesn't want me to be aware on this earth that I do love him, that doesn't matter. It is enough for me that he knows."


Announcing Escobar's death to the other members of the Work on September 13, 1933, Escrivá wrote: "Prayer and suffering have been the wheels of the triumphal chariot of this sister of ours. We have not lost her. We have *gained* her. We want the natural pain that we feel on learning of her death to be transformed promptly into the supernatural joy of knowing that we now certainly have more power in heaven."

Escobar was the third member of the Work to die in the space of a year and a half. In addition, during that same time, some others in whom Escrivá had placed his hopes left the Work. Escrivá felt their loss as sharply as he felt the deaths of Somoano, Gordon, and Escobar.

* * *

Seen from the outside, in fall 1933, Opus Dei seemed still not to have found its feet. Five years after its foundation, there was still very little to show for all of Escrivá's prayer and sacrifice. Nonetheless, a small nucleus of members was beginning to form who would stay the course and help him develop the Work. These members included Zorzano, Jiménez Vargas, González Barredo, and Fernández Vallespín. With their help, it would soon be possible for Opus Dei to open its first center.

The First Center

 1933-1934

A Background of Tension and Violence

Political tension and violence would continue to have an impact on the development of Opus Dei during 1933 and 1934. Because Spain was only slightly industrialized and had never been fully integrated into the world economy, it was spared the worst effects of the depression that was ravaging the United States and many other countries. Nonetheless, some sectors of the economy were suffering from the depression, and the entire country was torn by social conflict.

Real wages were rising slightly for those who were employed, but unemployment was widespread. In the absence of an effective system of unemployment insurance, the situation of the unemployed was often desperate. Strikes frequently disrupted the economy and affected ordinary services. In 1932, 660 strikes involved 250,000 workers and 3.6 million lost days of work. In 1933, there were more than 1,100 strikes involving 850,000 strikers and 12.5 million lost work days. Many of the strikes were violent, especially because the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the CNT, believed the situation was ripe for social revolution.

The climate of violence and uncertainty was increased for Catholics by new governmental measures directed against the Church, especially against religious orders. In the spring of 1933, the government introduced legislation to implement the constitutional principles regarding religious orders. Debate on the proposed Law of Religious Congregations was long and acrimonious, and its echoes filled the press and private conversation during much of the spring.

The law that finally emerged from the assembly called for the confiscation of all churches and monasteries, although the Church would be permitted to continue using the buildings. The religious orders were subjected to severe governmental controls, and their members were prohibited from teaching anything other than Christian doctrine. In many cases, Catholics found ways to keep open the schools formerly run by the religious orders, often with little change other than in their legal status.

Although the law was relatively ineffective in destroying Catholic education, it served to sharpen the hostility of most Catholics toward the government. One prominent Catholic member of the Parliament declared, "We Catholic Republicans feel deceived because the Republic has not respected our sentiments or kept its promises." Many other Catholics were much less measured in their anger.

The hierarchy responded with a collective pastoral that denounced the "plundering" of the Church's goods as sacrilegious and forbade Catholics to send their children to non-Catholic schools without permission of the local bishop. Pope Pius XI affirmed, once again, that the Church had no quarrel with the republican form of government and was prepared to cooperate with the government of Spain. However, he vigorously denounced the new measures, which, he declared, expressed "hatred against our Lord and his Christ nourished by groups subversive to any religious and social order, as alas we have seen in Mexico and Russia."

On the local level, government officials continued to harass Catholics, often in petty ways. In July 1933, Zorzano was at the bishop's residence attending the first meeting of the board of Catholic Action in Malaga, when the police entered, charging the participants with holding an illegal secret meeting. Although the meeting was in fact clearly legal, the commissioner of police insisted on their coming to the police station where they were held for an hour before being dismissed without charges. The episode was unimportant, but incidents of this sort antagonized many Catholics without making any positive contribution to the goals of the Republicans.

Founding the DYA Academy

Against this unpropitious background, Escrivá decided the time had come to establish the first center of Opus Dei. The apartment he had rented for his family in December 1932 provided a place to meet with students and others, but it was not suitable for the long term. The apartment was small, and it was unfair to expect his family to put up with a continuous stream of young people in their home, a stream that he hoped would increase with time. Furthermore, due to the tense political situation of the time, the police were wary of unexplained meetings, especially of university students. Opus Dei needed a place where groups of young people could come together without arousing unjustified suspicions.

His experience teaching at the Amado Institute in Zaragoza and the Cicuéndez Academy in Madrid had persuaded Escrivá that a private academy would be the best solution. It would be a professional, secular activity, in keeping with Opus Dei's character. In addition to providing an appropriate location for classes and other gatherings of students, it would offer many opportunities for meeting both students and professors who might understand Opus Dei's message.

Early in 1933, although he had no money with which to start an academy, Escrivá started speaking with potential professors. Perhaps because his resources were so inadequate, he decided to name the future academy DYA, the Spanish acronym for God and Daring (*Dios y Audacia*), as well as for the two principal subjects in which it would initially specialize, law and architecture (*Derecho y Arquitectura*). During the summer of 1933, Zorzano and Barredo took advantage of trips to Madrid to look for a place where DYA could open by the beginning of the school year in early October.

Finding a suitable locale at an affordable price proved difficult. On several occasions, it seemed that they had found something appropriate, but the deals fell through at the last minute. As the school year commenced, Opus Dei members were still busy looking at apartments that were either hopelessly inadequate or well beyond their means.

They were impatient to get started. On October 6, Escrivá

wrote, "I don't lose my peace. At times, however, I think my head will explode with all the things for the glory of God that bubble inside me—his Work—and with the sorrow I feel that they have not yet begun to crystallize into something concrete." A few days later, he added, "My head aches. I suffer because of my lack of correspondence, and because I don't see the Work moving." At the beginning of November, he commented, "These days we are looking for an apartment all over again! How many staircases and how much impatience! May he pardon me!"

Finally, in mid-November, they found a four-room apartment at 33 Luchana Street, near the new campus of the University of Madrid, on the outskirts of the city. With great optimism, they felt that it would be suitable for their needs and that they would be able to pay the rent out of student fees and donations from well-wishers. Zorzano, one of the few members of the Work with a steady income, came from Malaga to sign the lease. Ricardo Fernández Vallespín, the architecture student who had joined Opus Dei early in October, began looking for furniture at second-hand furniture dealers and in Madrid's large flea market.

Tone of the Academy

In keeping with the character of Opus Dei, the academy registered with both government and Church authorities, not as a center sponsored by the Church but as an educational center established by a group of laymen interested in education and exercising their rights as citizens. Escrivá served as DYA's chaplain but not as its director. This set the pattern that characterized the activities of Opus Dei members in the years that followed. Laymen would direct and be responsible for the programs of the centers, and priests would limit themselves to serving as chaplains.

It was common in Spain, at the time, for Catholics to use religious names to refer to secular activities. Many stores with no special connection to the Church or religious orders had names like St. Barbara's Candy Shop or St. Paul's Bakery. The initials DYA reminded Escrivá and the other members of the Work of the

motto “God and Daring,” but they actually stood for “Law and Architecture.”

In speaking among themselves, those who were actively involved in Opus Dei’s apostolic activities sometimes referred to the apartment as the House of the Guardian Angel. This first apartment on Luchana Street, a second set of apartments on Ferraz Street in Madrid, and a center established in Burgos during the civil war were the only Opus Dei centers that the members of the Work ever referred to, even among themselves, with any name that had religious overtones. From 1938 on, all centers of Opus Dei were known exclusively by names with no religious overtones, often taken from the street they were on or from some prominent local geographic feature. The buildings that house Opus Dei’s central offices in Rome, for instance, are known as Villa Tevere for the Tiber River, which is only a few blocks away.

By early December, the few pieces of furniture Escrivá and the others had been able to gather had been moved into the apartment. The members of the Work, their friends, and students who had sought spiritual direction from Escrivá took on the task of cleaning, decorating, and preparing the apartment for its new use as an academy. They had no choice, as they could not afford to hire professionals. In any case, Escrivá welcomed this opportunity to involve the young men personally in the project. For those who were receiving spiritual formation in the Work of St. Raphael, whom he called St. Raphael boys, it was important that they see the center as their own—not just an academy but their home.

Escrivá encouraged those who were involved in Opus Dei’s activities to take responsibility for the apostolate of the Work. He stressed that what was being done at DYA was not a matter of purely local interest but something of universal scope. In his first personal conversation with one student, for example, Escrivá explained that great confidence in God and supernatural daring would be needed to extend the apostolate of the Work. He stressed the importance of foreign languages in spreading the Work to other countries. Although it was the student’s first contact with Opus Dei, he was so moved by Escrivá’s faith in the expansion of the Work that he asked him what language he should

study. "Look," Escrivá responded, "some people are already studying German, Japanese, and other languages, but no one is studying Russian. If you like, you could study Russian." So contagious was Escrivá's zeal and certainty about the future expansion of the Work, that the student bought a Russian dictionary and began studying. He did not even question the fruitfulness of learning Russian when the country was in Communist hands.

The members of the Work tried to give the academy a warm and welcoming air, often bringing knickknacks or pieces of furniture from their homes. Escrivá took so many things from the family apartment that his little brother began asking him as he went out the door, "What are you taking to your nest today?" Those efforts were successful. DYA's tone was not that of a barracks, a monastery, or even an ordinary educational center. Rather, it evoked feelings of the home of a middle-class family with few means but good taste.

The small office where Escrivá received visits was something of an exception to this rule. It was sparsely decorated and austere. On top of the desk there was a skull that he jokingly referred to as "Lady Bald," and on the wall a large black cross with no figure of Christ crucified. In later centers, things like the skull would disappear altogether. The cross without a figure of Christ would remain a feature of the centers of Opus Dei but would be moved to the oratories. It would remind those who prayed there that the cross "is awaiting the Crucified it lacks; and that Crucified must be you."

An Island of Study in a Sea of Politics

Serious study characterized DYA. In addition to tutoring and review classes in law and architecture, the academy provided a study room that offered students a quiet place to work. Over and over again, Escrivá reminded the students who came there that they had an obligation to learn as much as they could and, if possible, to excel in their studies. "You pray, you deny yourself, you work in a thousand apostolic activities, but you don't study. You are useless then unless you change. Study—professional

training of whatever type it be is a grave obligation for us." One of the first members of *Opus Dei* recalls that his first recollections of the center were of being urged to outdo himself in acquiring an in-depth education and in developing apostolic zeal.

At a time when the university was torn by political conflict and many students neglected their studies to attend political rallies, *DYA* offered an oasis of Christian charity and understanding. Its first director, Fernández Vallespín, said its tone was one of "peace, love of God, and serenity despite the adverse circumstances of the social and political environment."

A framed parchment hung on one wall of the study room. It contained the Latin text of Christ's words at the Last Supper: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. In this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13: 34-35). In an environment of mounting political tensions, Escrivá encouraged the young men who came to *DYA* to put this commandment into practice in their daily lives, no matter how difficult. He repeatedly warned them against the danger of sectarianism and urged them not to let political differences degenerate into hatred. "We may differ on political issues," he said, "but that is no reason why we can't walk arm in arm down the same side of the street."

Students who came to *DYA* were asked to leave their political differences at the door and to avoid political arguments. This made it possible to welcome students of different political opinions, avoiding the prevailing atmosphere of intense political polarization that often made it difficult for students to live and work harmoniously with anyone who did not fully share their political views.

DYA's emphasis on study and its prohibition against political arguments were not the result of lack of concern for the society and its problems. On the contrary, Escrivá and Vallespín urged the young men who came to *DYA* to cultivate a sincere concern for others and for the society. They stressed that the students had an obligation to contribute to the peace and progress of society by bringing to it Christ's message of love, rather than the spirit of

division and hatred that seemed to be spreading in Spain. But they insisted that they would not be able to build a better society without solid professional training. "Study. Study in earnest," Escrivá said. "If you are to be salt and light, you need knowledge, ability." Outside DYA, the students were free to take part in whatever political organizations they wished; but Escrivá and Vallespín tried to help them see that if they spent the greater part of their university years in political rallies, they would not acquire the professional competence and prestige they would need to make a valuable contribution to society.

Although DYA was open to students of all political persuasions, it is not surprising that those who attended the academy did not represent the full spectrum of political opinion in Spain. Few university students were militants of working-class movements of the Left—principally the Spanish Socialist Workers and the Anarchists. In addition, those groups were hostile to the Church. Therefore, the rare Socialist or Anarchist student would hardly be interested in an academy that had a chaplain, where classes of Catholic doctrine were offered, and where a small picture of the Blessed Virgin hung on the wall of the study room along with Christ's New Commandment.

A larger number of university students belonged to the center-left parties, such as the Radical Socialists. Bitter opposition to the Church and a desire to eliminate Catholic influence in education and culture were central factors in those parties' political programs. A student who had embraced their ideology was unlikely to have any interest in an academy that encouraged students not merely to live a life of piety but also to spread Christ's doctrine throughout the society. Consequently, students interested in what DYA had to offer were, almost inevitably, either apolitical or members of the parties of the Center-Right and Right.

Formative Activities at DYA

In addition to law and architecture, DYA offered seminars on Catholic doctrine and the classes of personal Christian formation, the St. Raphael circles. In the two and a half years between the

date of the first circle and May 1935, 182 circles were given. A total of approximately eighty young men attended one or more. Many of the students who came to the DYA Academy also sought spiritual direction from Escrivá. Often the small apartment was so crowded that he had to hear confessions in the kitchen.

Even in his initial conversations with students at DYA, Escrivá spoke with warmth, conviction, and directness about the truths of the faith, without putting on other-worldly airs. For example, at the beginning of his first conversation with José Luis Múzquiz, Escrivá said energetically, but also with great naturalness, "There is no greater love than Love itself."

A student who received spiritual direction from Escrivá in the 1930s, José Ramón Herrero Fontana, described his experience as follows:

He was very realistic and spoke about real issues but said things that nobody had said until then. Being with him, you strongly felt God's call to sanctify yourself in the midst of the world. . . . Meeting the Father transformed me. He revealed to me a previously unsuspected interior world and inspired in me great desires to bring others to know and be in touch with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another student, Francisco Botella, who joined Opus Dei in the fall of 1935, said of his first meeting with Escrivá, "I can still recall how his penetrating gaze burrowed into my soul and how his cheerfulness stirred me up, filling me with joy and peace."

Meditations

Soon Escrivá began to organize one-day retreats for college students, which he called "days of recollection." They were held once a month in the nearby Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, run by the Redemptorists. They began early in the morning and ran until mid-afternoon. In addition to Mass and the stations of the cross, they consisted of three or four meditations preached by Escrivá.

Escrivá's style matured in the years between the 1930s and the 1950s and 1960s, when the meditations contained in his two published collections of homilies, *Christ Is Passing By* and *Friends of God*, were preached. Those published texts, however, are the best available source for getting an idea of the style and tone of the meditations he gave during the days of recollection in the 1930s.

Although the editors of the collections have called them "homilies," they have nothing of the flowery rhetoric prevalent among Spanish preachers in the 1930s. Escrivá would read aloud a few short passages from the Gospels and comment on them in an intimate, personal way. Although he had a strong background in Sacred Scripture, his commentaries were not erudite exegesis but personal conversations with Christ about his life and about its consequences for Escrivá himself and for his hearers.

The goal of the meditations was less to impart intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures than to lead the listeners to know Christ personally, to converse with him, and to assimilate his message into their daily lives. As one author said, the essence was not instruction and explanation but "a real encounter between Christ and the one who listens or meditates; it is a silent dialogue, a supernatural tête-à-tête." The key to capturing the character of the meditations is to realize that Escrivá was not delivering a sermon as an exercise in rhetoric. He was voicing out loud his own personal conversation with Christ, his personal prayer. Frequently he would turn toward the tabernacle and speak to Jesus present there. Even when he was not directly addressing Christ in the tabernacle, it was obvious to the listeners that he was talking to him. The Christ whom he addressed was not a historical figure but a living person with whom he was intimately familiar and deeply in love.

Because they grew out of his own interior life and his experience in giving spiritual direction, the meditations spoke directly to many of Escrivá's hearers. As a university student, majoring in Spanish history, who attended Escrivá's meditations recalls:

Each one felt as if personally addressed. His inner problems, his own struggles—these were what the Father was talking

about. Listening to him, one felt an enormous desire to love God, to atone, truly to give oneself once and for all. He opened up vast horizons for us. Far from being mere day-dreams or wishful thinking, he presented them as realities that we could attain by being faithful to grace, in our daily struggle. God would bring them about if we struggled decidedly to glorify him in even the tiniest details of ordinary life.

A friar who attended a retreat preached by Escrivá to a group of Augustinians commented that Escrivá “expressed in words of fire what he carried inside. I have never heard anyone comment on Gospel texts as he did.” Another priest who attended a retreat preached by Escrivá was struck that “his words were at times so fiery that . . . they resembled our Lord’s own words when he blasted the ‘brood of vipers.’ His energetic tone, his forceful words rejecting spiritual mediocrity, revealed the integrity of his personal dedication to God. . . .”

If, in Escrivá’s mind, the goal of all of the apostolate of *Opus Dei* for young people was to make them “men of prayer,” this was especially true of the meditations. They were meant to help the listeners learn to pray on their own, to teach them to converse with Christ in the silence of their hearts. Often Escrivá would urge his listeners not to feel obliged to follow the train of the meditation. The important thing, he would tell them, is not to hear what I say, but to talk with Jesus about his life and yours, following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. A person who attended a number of his meditations, wrote:

It was impossible to remain a spectator when the Father preached. He personally prayed aloud and drew us into his prayer, helping us to respond interiorly to our Lord, to speak to him on our own account. At times, to move us to acts of compunction or love or generosity, he’d look at the tabernacle and then at us and say, “I’m already talking with him, but what are you saying to our Lord?” He would remind us not to sit there like bags of sand but to speak to God on our own.

Over the years, meditations of this sort, preached by priests of Opus Dei, became a crucial part of Opus Dei's apostolate of teaching people to become men and women of prayer.

Financial Difficulties

The DYA Academy was an academic and apostolic success but a financial disaster. It was new and unknown, so the number of students was still small. Student fees and contributions were not sufficient to cover rent and salaries. When the bills came due, Vallespín had to decide which ones had to be paid immediately and which could be put off for a few weeks. Money that had been accumulated for furnishings instead had to be spent on more urgent needs. Occasionally, relief came from unexpected quarters. One day the electric company was threatening to cut off the electricity if its twenty-five-peseta bill was not paid immediately. As Escrivá was tearing up and discarding a tattered envelope, something caught his eye. Inside he found a twenty-five-peseta note, which he taped back together and used to pay the electric bill.

Such windfalls, however, were not sufficient to balance the books. Early in January 1934, Escrivá called a meeting of two priests and three professional men connected with DYA to discuss the financial situation. Both priests advised closing the academy. Keeping it going, they said, was like jumping out of a plane without a parachute and expecting God to come to the rescue. The laymen were not much more encouraging. Nonetheless, Escrivá was determined that DYA should not only stay open but should look for larger quarters for the following year. On January 5, 1934, he asked the few members of the Work living in Madrid to look for a place big enough to permit the expansion of the academy and also the addition of a student residence with a chapel.

A few days later, he entrusted DYA to the patronage of St. Joseph and promised that if St. Joseph solved the financial problems, he would name the new center in his honor. Less than a week later he received an extraordinary donation of 6,000 pesetas, which he set aside for the new center.

Escrivá's determination to press ahead despite overwhelming

difficulties reflected, in part, his naturally buoyant and optimistic temperament, but ultimately it rested on his conviction that God wanted him to move forward quickly. Each time he administered Holy Communion to the nuns of St. Elizabeth's, there echoed in his ears the reproach, "Love is deeds, not sweet words and excuses." Having a residence would make it possible for some of the members of the Work to live together in a family atmosphere and to learn the spirit of Opus Dei quickly and in depth. In his notes, he observed, "Haste. It's not haste. It is Jesus pushing."

* * *

Although the center on Luchana Street did provide a locale where members of the Work could meet with people and conduct activities, something larger, which could accommodate a small residence and a chapel with the Blessed Sacrament, was clearly needed. Obtaining it would not prove easy.

Setbacks and Growth

 1934-1935

DYA Adds a Residence

In the 1930s, most Spanish university students, including those whose families lived in Madrid, left the capital during the summer to escape the oppressive heat. To keep in touch during the summer with the students who had been involved in DYA's activities, the members of Opus Dei published a newsletter on a primitive mimeograph machine. They also wrote many letters to their friends, to which Escrivá often added a few words encouraging the recipients to keep up their life of prayer and to let him know how they were doing.

In August, the flow of outgoing letters from DYA increased sharply. After weeks of searching, they had found a suitable new place for the academy and a residence, but they needed to make a deposit of 25,000 pesetas, which they did not have. Escrivá sent out short notes to many friends requesting prayers. He asked one person to pray to Mary Immaculate for three days. Another he urged to "become a small child in front of the tabernacle and say to Jesus the following simple, confident, daring, and persevering prayer: 'Lord we want, for your sake, 25,000 pesetas in cold hard cash.'" The campaign of prayers was a success, and soon they were able to make the deposit.

In September, they occupied two apartments on the second floor and one on the third floor of a building located at 50 Ferraz Street, near the campus that was being constructed for the University of Madrid. The third-floor apartment would house the academy, and the two second-floor apartments would be the residence. Zorzano and Vallespín depleted their bank accounts to

pay the deposit and the first month's rent; but where were they to find the money to convert the apartments to their new use and to furnish them?

Escrivá decided to ask his family to give DYA part of the proceeds of some property they had recently inherited. He still had not explained Opus Dei to his mother, sister, or brother. When they asked, "What are we doing here in Madrid where things have gone so badly for us?" he avoided the question and changed the subject.

It is not known why Escrivá waited almost six years to talk to his family about what had happened on October 2, 1928, and to explain to them what he had been doing since then. Part of the explanation may lie in the fact that for a long time he had nothing external to show for his efforts. The only thing he could have told them about was the vision of October 2, and throughout his life he was very reluctant to talk about that experience or other supernatural experiences of his life, even with members of Opus Dei. Whatever the motives of his reticence, Escrivá decided that now the time had come to tell his mother, sister, and brother about Opus Dei.

On September 16, 1934, after praying ardently for his family, he traveled to northern Spain where they were staying and explained, in general terms, what he had been doing since October 2, 1928. Then Escrivá asked them to put part of the money they had recently inherited into the residence. At the same time, he told them that he planned to move to the new residence as soon as possible.

In a letter to the members of Opus Dei a few days later, he described the conversation:

A quarter of an hour after reaching town (I'm writing from Fonz, although I will mail the letter tomorrow in Barbastro), I told my mother, brother, and sister, in general terms, about the Work. How much I had importuned our friends in heaven for this moment! Jesus made them accept it very well. I'll tell you literally what they said. My mother: "Fine, son. But don't beat yourself [referring to his use of the disciplines], and don't

go around frowning." My sister: "I thought as much and I told Mom so." The little one: "If you have sons . . . , those boys have to treat me with a lot of respect, because I am their uncle!" All three of them immediately thought it was only natural that they should use their money for the Work. Their generosity was so great that, glory be to God, if they had millions they would have given it all.

But, even with the Escrivás' money and stretching their credit to the limit, they did not have enough to furnish the whole residence. For the moment, they could only set up one "model" bedroom, in the hope of purchasing furniture for the rest of the house when the new residents paid their deposits. The plan might have worked had it not been for the political turmoil that engulfed Spain in October 1934.

The Uprising of 1934

The immediate political roots of the October 1934 uprising are found in the elections held in the fall of 1933. By that time, Spanish conservatives had recovered from the shock and disorganization that had caused them to make such a poor showing in the 1931 elections. In preparation for the 1933 elections, they formed an electoral coalition, the Union of the Right, that included not only monarchist parties bent on reinstating the king but also the Spanish Coalition of the Autonomous Right (CEDA), a large, recently formed Catholic party that said it was willing to live with either a republic or a monarchy. The parties that made up the Union of the Right were divided on many issues. They agreed, however, on revoking anticlerical legislation, on opposing the agrarian reforms sponsored by the parties of the Left, and on granting an amnesty to those accused of political crimes during the first years of the Second Republic. This enabled them to present a single candidate in most districts and thus take advantage of the winner-take-all character of the electoral system that had worked against them and in favor of the parties of the Left in 1931. In addition, conservatives also benefited from the fact that

women, who had not been enfranchised in 1931, were able to vote in 1933.

In contrast, the parties of the Left and Center-Left were so badly divided after two years of fierce fighting in the Parliament that they could not present a united front in the elections. Most Anarchists abstained from voting and from taking part in the campaign. The Socialists were unable to reach an agreement with the parties of the Center-Left. The division of the Left and Center-Left cost them dearly in the election.

The largest number of deputies elected in 1933 belonged to the CEDA. The next largest bloc belonged to the center-left Radical party. The Socialists won less than half as many seats as the CEDA. The party of the man who had been the dominant figure in the first two years of the Republic, Manuel Azaña, won only a handful of seats.

Spain had no tradition of peaceful acceptance of electoral defeats. The parties of the Left viewed the Second Republic as their own creation and cried foul when the electoral law, which had benefited them in 1931, worked against them in 1933. Numerous protest-strikes and riots broke out, inspired mostly by the large Anarchist trade unions. Labor leaders spoke freely about Spain's need for a revolution like the Soviet revolution in Russia.

Shortly after the 1933 elections, a centrist government was formed. The CEDA showed considerable moderation, agreeing to vote for the government's program without being given any seats in the cabinet, despite being the largest single party in the Parliament. During the next year, the government revoked some of the initial agrarian reform measures that had been instituted since 1931. It also granted amnesty to many who had been imprisoned for opposition to the Republican regime.

The swing to the Right in government policies was significant, but not dramatic. The Spanish Left, however, viewed it with alarm. They saw it as part of the European movement that had brought Hitler to power in 1933 and had made possible Dolfuss's suppression of the Austrian Socialist party in February 1934. For a year, Spain was torn by frequent strikes and a number of small-scale revolts.

In the fall of 1934, the CEDA announced that it was no longer willing to support the government without having representatives in the cabinet. On October 4, 1934, a new government was formed. The majority of the ministers belonged to the center-left Radical party, but members of the CEDA headed the Ministries of Justice, Labor, and Agriculture. The Left responded with a nationwide general strike and a revolutionary uprising. The movement quickly failed in most of the country except for Catalonia, in the northeast near Barcelona, and the mining area of Asturias, in northern Spain. After a few days, the government regained control of Catalonia, but a full-scale revolution began in Asturias.

The government called in the Army of Africa, from Spain's small colonies on the north coast of Africa, to put down the revolution in Asturias. This was a desperate move. About a third of the troops were Moroccans. The Army of Africa was trained to put down colonial uprisings with whatever force was necessary. To many Spaniards, it was unthinkable that it would be used in Spain. Fighting was bitter; neither the revolutionaries nor the army showed any restraint. More than one thousand civilians and some three hundred soldiers, Civil Guards, and police lost their lives. Nearly one thousand buildings were burned, blown up, or otherwise damaged. In the aftermath of the revolution, thirty thousand people were imprisoned.

The Asturian revolution was strongly anticlerical. By the time peace was restored, fifty-eight churches had been destroyed and thirty-four priests and religious had been killed. This level of violence against persons marked a new phase in the history of Spanish anticlericalism. In previous outbreaks of anticlerical violence there had been extensive property damage, but attacks on priests and religious had been rare except for the events of 1834.

The leaders of the 1934 revolt justified it on grounds that it was required to head off a fascist coup. In fact, there was no significant fascist threat in Spain in 1934. Actually, the revolt galvanized the parties of the Right and their military supporters and contributed to the military uprising that started the civil war in 1936. This eventually allowed the semi-fascist Falangist party to dominate

Spanish political life under Franco. In this regard, there is a striking parallel between the 1934 revolt and the military uprising of July 1936, which its authors justified on grounds of heading off a nonexistent threat of Communist revolution but which in fact touched off the revolution it was intended to avert.

DYA's Financial Crisis

Spanish universities had long been hotbeds of political activism. The last thing the government wanted in the highly charged atmosphere of the fall of 1934 was to bring together thousands of students in Madrid, so it indefinitely postponed the beginning of the school year. As long as the university remained closed, there was no hope of obtaining the residents DYA desperately needed to pay its bills.

DYA did everything it could to reduce expenses. As had happened in the first apartment, the members of the Work, their friends, and other students did much of the painting and other work needed to convert the apartments to their new use as a student residence and academy. University students who would never have thought of picking up a hammer or a paintbrush in their own homes, where there was no tradition of doing it yourself, soon found themselves pressed into service at DYA. When an engineering student, José María Hernández de Garnica, visited DYA for the first time in the fall of 1934, he found Escrivá and a group of students hard at work preparing the best room in the house for a future oratory. No sooner had they been introduced than Escrivá gave him a hammer and asked him to get up on a ladder to help install a canopy on the ceiling over the spot where the altar would eventually go.

Escrivá, Vallespín, who had recently graduated from the School of Architecture and was serving as the director of the residence, and other members of the Work spent long hours doing dishes, cleaning rooms, and making beds. These were tasks they had probably never performed growing up in a society in which even modest middle-class families had one or more servants and in which housekeeping was women's work.

Despite these efforts, by December the financial situation was becoming desperate. As Escrivá prepared to celebrate Mass on December 6, the feast of St. Nicolas of Bari, who is known for solving economic problems, he challenged the saint to resolve DYA's financial crisis, "If you get me out of this one, I'll name you patron of the economic affairs of the Work." As he left the sacristy, he repented and added, "and even if you don't."

In February 1935, DYA had to give up the third-floor apartment and move the academy into one of the second-floor apartments. After so much prayer, sacrifice and effort, this was a serious setback for a group of young, inexperienced people who had put their whole hearts into an apostolic activity.

Escrivá urged them not to be discouraged. "Let those very obstacles give you strength. God's grace will not fail you: '*Inter medium montium pertransibunt aquae!* You shall pass through the mountains!' Does it matter that you have to curtail your activity for the moment if afterward, like a spring which has been compressed, you will reach incomparably farther than you ever dreamed?" The members of the Work adopted this optimistic interpretation of events. In a letter Zorzano wrote, "We are compressed now . . . so as to leap forward at the right moment."

The First Oratory of Opus Dei

Despite financial difficulties, Escrivá and the members of the Work pressed ahead with plans to install in the residence a chapel, or "oratory," as Escrivá called it to stress that it was a place of prayer. Months would go by before they could scrape together the money for an altar, a tabernacle, and the other items needed to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved. Initially, the room set aside for the future oratory contained only a table with a crucifix and two candles, a couple of benches, and a statue of the Blessed Virgin by the young sculptor Jenaro Lázaro. The few residents would gather there to say the rosary, to attend a meditation preached by Escrivá, or simply to pray on their own.

By February or March of 1935, they had acquired a wooden altar and a picture of Jesus' meeting with the disciples on their

way to Emmaus. Mother Muratori, a nun of the Sisters of Reparation, lent them a wooden tabernacle. Escrivá was anxious to have Christ in the Eucharist present in the house as soon as possible. "Jesus," he prayed, "will you soon come to the tabernacle in your House of the Guardian Angel? We want you to come."

On March 13, 1935, Escrivá sent a petition to the archbishop of Madrid, explaining the spiritual activities that were being held in the residence and asking for permission to establish a semi-public oratory where Mass could be said and the Blessed Sacrament reserved. He hoped to celebrate Mass for the first time in the oratory on Sunday, March 31, 1935, but they still lacked many essential items. Toward the end of March, a distinguished-looking bearded gentleman, wearing an old-fashioned Spanish cape, anonymously left a package containing everything they needed. Escrivá said the benefactor might have been a friend of his, Alejandro Guzmán, but the residents said, half-jokingly and half-seriously, that it must have been St. Nicholas or St. Joseph. They mentioned St. Joseph because Escrivá had been asking them to pray incessantly to him for the gift of Eucharistic bread, prefigured in the Old Testament by the bread that Joseph distributed to the Egyptians at the Pharaoh's orders.

On March 31, 1935, Escrivá celebrated Mass in the residence. For the first time, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was present in the tabernacle of a center of Opus Dei. Although Escrivá was saddened by the poor quality of the tabernacle and of the sacred vessels, he was overjoyed to have Christ present in the center. He urged the members of the Work, the residents, and the students who came to DYA for classes to keep Jesus company. "The Lord," he told one of them, "should never feel alone and forgotten here. Even though in some churches he may be alone and forgotten at times, in this house, where so many students live and where so many other young people come, he will feel content, surrounded by everyone's piety and company. Help me to keep him company."

A few weeks later, Escrivá wrote to the vicar general of Madrid, "Since we have had Jesus in the tabernacle in this house, we have noticed his presence extraordinarily clearly. He came and the work increased in breadth and depth."

Criticism and Relations with the Hierarchy

Because of the changes occasioned by the end of the monarchy, Escrivá's position as chaplain of the nuns of the former Royal Foundation of St. Elizabeth remained uncertain. Although he had been serving as chaplain since summer 1931, he had only a temporary appointment. During the summer of 1934, the prioress of the convent learned that the rector planned to retire soon. The position of rector involved few official duties, because the chaplain ministered to the nuns on a day-to-day basis. Nonetheless, the rector received a respectable stipend and had the use of an apartment. Furthermore, the position could be a springboard to important diocesan posts. Escrivá was reluctant to apply for the position, but the prioress applied for him. In December 1934, he was officially named rector of St. Elizabeth's in a decree signed by the president of the Republic. At the same time, he was given permission to say Mass, hear confessions, and preach in Madrid until June 1936.

In Escrivá's home diocese of Zaragoza, some priests, who thought it inappropriate for a priest to have any dealings with a government they considered an enemy of the Church, criticized Escrivá's acceptance of an appointment conferred by the Republican government. When he heard rumors of this, Escrivá wrote to the bishop of Cuenca, who was a relative, asking him to explain to the archbishop of Zaragoza that he had not solicited the position, that he had the approval of the vicar general of Madrid, and that he stood ready to renounce the position at any time should the bishop of Zaragoza so desire.

This was not the first time that Escrivá had found himself the object of criticism. The opening of the DYA Academy had stirred up a number of rumors among some priests in Madrid, who were not used to seeing a priest involved in an activity that was not officially Catholic. Some talked about an "apostolic sect." Others called it a "white masonry," because they considered secretive the fact that the students who attended DYA did not parade their Catholicism or wear lapel pins or badges identifying themselves as connected with the academy. Others who had heard something

about Escrivá's message that lay men and women were called to holiness and apostolate dismissed him as *crazy*.

These rumors gave Escrivá an opportunity to speak at length with the vicar general of the diocese, Fr. Francisco Moran, and to inform him about the activities of the academy and of Opus Dei. Escrivá confined himself to speaking about activities—what he described as Opus Dei's "external history"—because he judged that the time had not yet come to seek formal ecclesiastical approval or to explain the inner nature of what God was asking him to do.

In his notes, he asked himself whether his reluctance to go into intimate spiritual details of the life of the Work, which at this stage largely coincided with his own spiritual life, implied something clandestine. He replied:

Not at all. What would one say about a pregnant woman who attempted to register her unborn child with the government and in the parish? And what if she tried to get him admitted to a university? People would say to her, "Madam, you'll have to wait. Let the child be born, grow, and develop." Well then, there is an unborn child still in the womb of the Catholic Church. It has its own life and activities, like an unborn child in its mother's womb. . . . Patience. The time will come to register it and to ask for the appropriate approvals. In the meantime, I will always inform the ecclesiastical authorities about all of our external undertakings, as I have done up to now. But I will not present papers whose time has not yet come. This is the advice I have received from Fr. Sanchez and from Fr. Peter Poveda. It is also, I might add, what common sense suggests.

Opus Dei still had no legal status, either in the eyes of the Church or of the government. All that existed was a informal group of young people who were receiving spiritual direction from Escrivá, some of whom had started the DYA Academy. Escrivá knew that eventually Opus Dei would need some legal structure, but for the moment he was content with a merely *de facto* existence.

He was concerned that asking for ecclesiastical approval prematurely might lead to an inappropriate classification of the Work. The canon law of the time made no provision for an institution like Opus Dei, whose members were men and women who held down ordinary jobs and were fully at home in the secular world yet dedicated their lives fully to God. His legal training made Escrivá aware that legal classifications can result in an institution's taking on the characteristics of the category into which it has been put, even though originally it was something quite different. In January 1936, he observed, "Undoubtedly all indications point to the fact that, were I to ask the bishop for the first ecclesiastical approval of the Work, he would grant it. But it is such an important matter that it must mature well. The Work of God requires a new form, and it would be easy to harm the way."

In addition to the lack of any appropriate niche for Opus Dei in the Church's legislation, there was the problem that most ecclesiastical authorities could not understand the nature of Opus Dei. The vicar general of Madrid was a good friend who held Escrivá in high esteem. Nonetheless, Escrivá was forced to admit that "he does not understand the Work." On another occasion, he commented, "He doesn't get it. He just doesn't get it." If the vicar general of the diocese, who had had numerous personal conversations with Escrivá and was a personal friend, could not fully understand what Opus Dei was about, it was obviously going to be difficult for other ecclesiastics to understand it.

Formalizing the Members' Commitments

Obtaining official ecclesiastical approval was something that could wait, but it was becoming urgent to formalize, in some way, the members' commitment. At first, it had been purely internal and informal. They had responded "yes" to God's invitation to dedicate their lives to him in Opus Dei and had told Escrivá of their decision. They could not, however, point to anything that manifested their decision. Some of them were disturbed when priests not connected with Opus Dei told them that their decision

to commit their lives to God was meaningless if it did not find some external expression.

Neither spiritual theology nor canon law offered Escrivá any satisfactory solution. In the minds of virtually all theologians and canonists, the idea of an all-encompassing vocational commitment to holiness and apostolate was linked to the notion of the religious state or the priesthood. Those who were neither priests nor religious might join various associations and groups, but this involved only a partial commitment that affected one aspect or another of their lives. There were no models for giving legal form to the vocational commitment to holiness and apostolate of people who were neither priests nor members of a religious order but continued to be lay men and women who worked in the world.

The only possible form seemed to be a vow. Public vows were inextricably linked in the minds of most Catholics with the religious orders, and Escrivá was determined to avoid any possible confusion of Opus Dei members with religious. He held in high esteem the vocation of the religious, but the calling to Opus Dei was something essentially different. It involved not renunciation of the world but the affirmation of secularity as a positive Christian value.

There was, of course, the possibility of private vows. It was not uncommon at the time for lay men and women to take private vows to do specific things, including vows of obedience to a spiritual director. No one thought that by making such a vow a man or woman became a religious. But many people would have a hard time distinguishing a private vow that involved a life-embracing commitment to following a particular path of holiness and apostolate in the world in response to a specific calling from the vows taken by religious.

By 1934, however, Escrivá felt that some formal manifestation of the commitment of Opus Dei members was becoming essential. After consulting with Fr. Norberto Rodríguez and with his spiritual director, Fr. Valentín Sánchez, S.J., he reluctantly decided that, until a better solution became available, a private vow was the best way of helping those who were coming to Opus Dei to be fully aware of the seriousness of the commitment they were

undertaking. He adopted the solution of vows, however, with the intention of finding another solution and with the condition that the vows were to be "extremely private," reserved to the conscience of the person making them. Opus Dei would not receive such vows, nor would they be the bond between Opus Dei and its members. That bond would be based on a simple declaration in which the member manifested his decision to dedicate his life to seeking holiness and doing apostolate according to the spirit of the Work.

On March 3, 1934, for the first time, members formalized their commitment to Opus Dei. From a legal point of view, this first commitment made in 1934 was a temporary one, even though it implied a firm spiritual decision to dedicate their entire lives to Opus Dei. On the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1935, for the first time a number of members formally committed themselves for life to Opus Dei. None of those who did so had been members of Opus Dei for very long. Zorzano had joined a little more than four and a half years earlier. Barredo and Vargas had been members of Opus Dei for two years. Vallespín had been in Opus Dei for only about a year and a half, but living in Madrid had permitted him to receive more continuous formation than either Zorzano or Barredo, who lived in the provinces.

Today, no one can make a legally binding, life-long commitment to God in Opus Dei until at least six and a half years after first joining. At this early stage, however, Opus Dei desperately needed some people who were fully committed to developing it. Escrivá decided that, in these circumstances, the human and spiritual maturity of these young men in question, combined with the special graces of the foundational period, justified their making a definitive commitment to God as members of Opus Dei at that time. Vallespín, Vargas, and Barredo did so on March 19, 1935. The simple ceremony took place in front of the wooden cross without a corpus in the oratory of the DYA Academy. Zorzano was not able to come to Madrid on March 19 and had to delay his definitive incorporation until April 18, 1935.

Escrivá explained that definitive incorporation to Opus Dei involved "dedicating your life forever to the Work." After they

pledged themselves permanently to God in Opus Dei, Escrivá asked each of them:

If our Lord should call me before the Work has the necessary canonical approvals that will give it stability, will you continue working to carry it on, even at the cost of your fortune, your honor, and your professional activity, in a word, putting your entire life at the service of God in his Work?

The question and their firm *yes* in response highlight the extraordinary commitment they were making. They pledged their entire lives in apostolic celibacy to something that as yet had no existence in the eyes of the Church or of civil society, placing their future at the service of an ideal that still had found almost no tangible expression. The only things they could point to were a small, financially unstable academy/residence and a penniless thirty-three-year-old priest who assured them that the undertaking they were involved in was a *Work of God* destined to bring the message of the universal call to holiness to men and women all over the world. That message was one that seemed crazy to most people. Those who did not find it crazy often did not understand it in depth, confusing Opus Dei with a new form of the religious life. The members of Opus Dei were committing themselves to something that was clearly going to require a great deal of prayer and effort before it found its place in the Church.

New Members

One day toward the end of January 1935, Pedro Casciaro, an architecture student from a small town in southeastern Spain, went to DYA at the insistence of a friend. Casciaro was not enthusiastic about meeting Escrivá or any other “dog collar,” as he usually called priests. He had been baptized and had received some rudimentary religious instruction from his mother. He shared, however, the attitudes of his father, who accompanied his wife to Mass on Sundays but wanted nothing to do with the clergy. Casciaro agreed to go to DYA mostly out of curiosity and

with the firm resolution not to discuss any personal matters with Escrivá.

He was agreeably surprised by the tasteful decoration of the academy and its warm, welcoming air. He was completely disarmed by Escrivá's infectious cheerfulness and good humor and by the personal interest the young priest took in him. After a few minutes, he found himself pouring out his soul, and by the end of their conversation he had asked Escrivá to be his spiritual director, although he had only the vaguest notion of what a spiritual director was.

As the months went by, Escrivá encouraged Casciaro both to practice the natural human virtues and to develop an interior life of prayer and sacrifice. He also needed to remedy serious gaps in his knowledge of the Church and its teaching. In his first visit to the DYA chapel in January, for instance, Casciaro had not even noticed that there was no tabernacle. When Escrivá pointed this out to him, Casciaro asked whether the Blessed Sacrament was normally kept overnight in churches.

Soon Casciaro also began to attend the circles given by Escrivá. In his memoirs, he describes them:

Week after week, Saturday after Saturday, circle after circle, he urged us to carry out an intense apostolate with our peers, showing us how to love God and fostering in us the desire to live a truly Christian life.

It was obvious that what he said to us did not come solely from study or from his wide experience of souls but also from his own deep interior life and prayer. . . . In his talks, the Father often referred to the *fire of the love of God*. He used to tell us that we had to spread that fire to all souls by word and example, without worrying about what people would think of us. He also asked us if among our friends we could not find a few who would understand the formation that was being given in the residence.

Among the things that struck Casciaro about Escrivá were "his cheerfulness, his constant good humor, his extraordinary way



Together with her daughter Carmen, Escrivá's mother, Doña Dolores, volunteered to oversee the housekeeping of Opus Dei's first centers. Thanks to their efforts, the "tone" of the centers was that of a Christian family rather than that of a barrack, school, or monastery.



Escrivá as a seminarian in 1924. During his years in the seminary and the early years of his priesthood, Escrivá had a sense that God was asking something of him, but he did not know what it was. He frequently prayed the prayer that the blind beggar Bartimeus directed to Jesus when Christ asked him what he wanted, "Lord, that I may see."

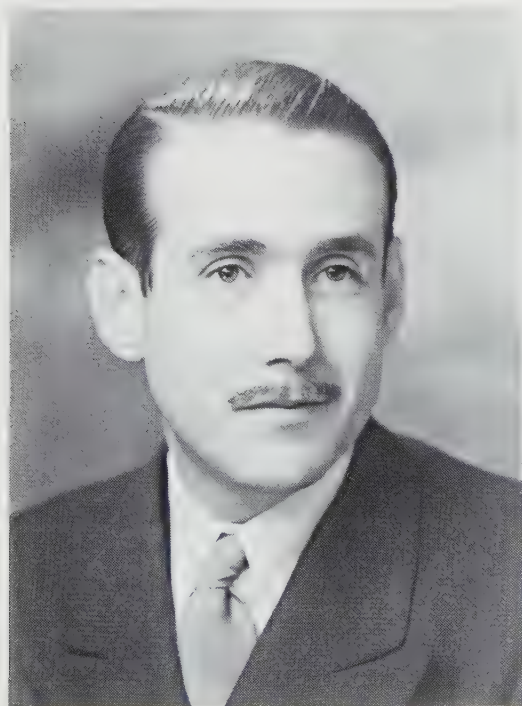


Francisco Botella was studying both architecture and engineering when he joined Opus Dei in 1935. He was caught in Valencia by the outbreak of the Civil War and was isolated from other members of the Work for a year. When Escrivá's strength gave out during the ordeal of crossing the Pyrenees mountains, Botella helped him to keep going. After the end of the Civil War, Botella played an important role in getting Opus Dei started in Valladolid.



Alvaro del Portillo was a civil engineer. In Spain in the 1940s, the military origin of the corps of engineers was still reflected in the dress uniform and medals worn by engineers on special occasions. Del Portillo joined Opus Dei in 1935. He soon became Escrivá's principal collaborator and later succeeded him as the head of Opus Dei in 1975.

Josemaría Hernández de Garnica spent much of the Civil War in prison. One day he was handcuffed and loaded onto a truck with other prisoners to be shot. As the truck was preparing to pull out, someone shouted his name and ordered him to get off and return to his cell. He became one of the first three priests ordained for Opus Dei.



In the space of a few months in 1935, Pedro Casciaro, whose father was a prominent Republican politician, went from being a non-practicing Catholic to being a member of Opus Dei. Thanks to his training as an architect, he was able to create a warm and tasteful environment in the early centers of Opus Dei despite having almost no money to work with. He later began the activities of Opus Dei in Mexico.



Isidoro Zorzano felt torn between his love for his work as an engineer and his sense that God wanted more of him. When Escrivá explained to him in August 1930 that he could dedicate himself entirely to God without abandoning his profession, Zorzano immediately recognized that this was what God was asking of him. He was the first person to join Opus Dei and persevere in it. During the Civil War, his Argentine citizenship gave him some freedom of movement and made it possible for him to be the liaison between Escrivá and other members of the Work.

Carmen Escrivá, shown here in 1942 with her dog “Piston,” never joined Opus Dei, but from the end of the Civil War she worked tirelessly overseeing the housekeeping at a number of Opus Dei centers and helping her brother in his apostolate with women.



In the early 1930s, Escrivá often brought the young men he was working with to his family’s apartment. This custom helped create a family atmosphere in Opus Dei, but it was a hardship for his mother, sister, and brother. Santiago Escrivá, shown here in a 1942 photo, protested: “Josemaría’s boys eat everything.”





José María González Barredo was doing doctoral research in chemistry at the Rockefeller Institute in Madrid when he joined Opus Dei in 1933. He was the first member of Opus Dei to come to the United States.



Ricardo Fernández Vallespin, an architect, met Opus Dei in 1933. Escrivá gave him a book about Christ's Passion, with this inscription: "May you look for Christ. May you find Christ. May you love Christ."

RIGHT: Escrivá and Jimenez Vargas in Barcelona in November 1937. During the time spent in Barcelona waiting for an opportunity to cross the Pyrenees, Escrivá and his companions spent most of the day walking because it was safer than staying indoors and because it helped them prepare for the rigors of hiking through the mountains after months of forced inactivity. Escrivá's papers identified him as an employee of the Consulate of Honduras.



BELOW: At dawn on December 2, 1937, Escrivá and his companions reached the Principality of Andorra after a harrowing five-day trek through the Pyrenees Mountains. This photo was taken the next day in the town of Les Escaldes. The refugees are still wearing the clothes and the hemp-soled sandals they had worn in the mountains. Standing (left to right): Alvira, Sainz de los Terreros, Escrivá, Casciaro, and Botella. Seated: Jiménez Vargas, Fisac, and Albareda.





Rafael Calvo Serer, an historian, joined Opus Dei shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War. He served in the Republican army during the war and went on to become well known as a professor and a newspaper editor.



Escrivá in August 1937 in Madrid, wearing a suit given to him by the Consul of Honduras. The photo dates from shortly before or after the day on which he left the safe haven of the Consulate. It may have been taken for use in obtaining an identity card.



Escrivá, together with his brother, Santiago, and Jiménez Vargas, still in uniform, in the ruins of the Ferraz Residence in 1939. The residence was so heavily damaged by artillery fire that it had to be abandoned.



Escrivá's room in the Jenner Residence in 1940. Next to the statue of the Blessed Virgin is an insulator used on electric transmission lines. Escrivá put it on the desk to remind him that his function was to transmit to others the spirit of Opus Dei.



Entrance vestibule of the Jenner Residence in 1940. The caption in the lower left-hand corner of the map reads "*A solis ortu usque ad occasum*" ("From the rising of the sun to the setting thereof," Ps 49:1). It reflects the far-reaching aspirations of Opus Dei even at a time when its activity was still confined to Spain.



Florencio Sánchez Bella, Rafael Calvo Serrer, and Manuel Botas, three early members of the Work, in the Samaniego Residence in Valencia in 1942. Opus Dei was poised to begin activities in Valencia when the Civil War broke out. Shortly after the end of the war, Escrivá preached several retreats in Valencia, and Opus Dei opened a center there.

Nisa González Guzmán, an accomplished tennis player and downhill skier, was living with her parents in León when she met Escrivá in August 1940. She joined Opus Dei in 1941. Soon thereafter she attended the first study week organized for women of Opus Dei. In the course of that week, in her words, Escrivá “put before our eyes the boundless sea that is Opus Dei, with a faith that made us touch the future.” In 1950, she emigrated to the United States to help start Opus Dei’s activities for women.



Encarnita Ortega spent much of the Civil War in prison because Republican officials in her native Valencia considered her an enemy of the Republic. Given a choice between working in the prison’s tailor shop or uprooting trees and digging ditches, she preferred to work outdoors. She joined Opus Dei after a retreat for women in Valenica/Valencia in 1939. During the retreat, Escrivá challenged his listeners to talk with Jesus in the tabernacle and “have the courage, at least, to look him in the eye and say to him, ‘I don’t want to give you what you are asking of me.’”



Lola Fisac learned about Opus Dei from her brother. During the Civil War, which she spent in her parents' home in the small town of Daimiel in the south of Spain, she corresponded occasionally with Escrivá and decided to join Opus Dei. Shortly after the end of the war, Escrivá visited her family and explained to her in more detail the vocation to Opus Dei.



María Ignacia García Escobar was already hospitalized for tuberculosis when she learned about Opus Dei from the hospital chaplain, Fr. José María Somoano. As one of the first members of Opus Dei, her illness took on new meaning. It was not a cross to be borne reluctantly, but the path that led her to God and permitted her to carry out a fruitful apostolate. Lying in a hospital bed, she helped prepare the way for thousands of other women who would seek holiness and carry out apostolates in a variety of professions and jobs.



The first women's center of Opus Dei took its name from the street in Madrid on which it was located, Jorge Manrique. Having a free-standing, single-family house with its own yard gave the first women of Opus Dei a degree of independence in carrying out their activities that would have been hard to achieve in the apartment buildings where most Spaniards lived in the 1940s.



Archbishop Leopoldo Eijo y Garay gave the first approvals to Opus Dei. Critics used his support of Opus Dei as a reason to oppose his elevation to Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain. Escrivá suggested that he stop defending Opus Dei against its critics because defending Opus Dei meant "putting at risk the miter of Toledo." The Archbishop replied, "Josemaria, what is at risk is not the miter of Toledo but my soul. I can abandon neither you nor Opus Dei."



José Luis Muzquíz, José María Hernández de Garnica, and Alvaro del Portillo with Escrivá shortly before their ordination in 1944 as the first three priests ordained for Opus Dei. Muzquíz was the first priest of Opus Dei to go to the United States.



The Sabadell Hotel in Burgos, in a photo taken many years after the end of the Civil War. Escrivá and his companions lived in the room immediately above the entrance. Escrivá often talked with visitors on the small, glassed-in porch.

with people, and his love of freedom.” The last point was especially important to Casciaro, because as he says in his memoirs,

I was very independent. My self-reliance was due both to my character and to the way in which I had been brought up. Perhaps that was why the Father’s teaching on valuing people’s freedom of conscience was so dear to me. He was always reminding us that love of freedom consists above all in defending other people’s freedom. The Father revealed the demands of the Christian life to me little by little, without forcing it into a straitjacket, nor smothering it under rigid norms or a predetermined mind-set. He helped me to live an increasingly devout life without ever diminishing or submerging any of my legitimate human aspirations. On the contrary, he made it more possible for me to achieve them.

By the time summer vacations rolled around, Casciaro had made significant progress in developing an interior life of prayer and sacrifice and in trying to help his friends and fellow students to live a more Christian life. Neither Escrivá nor anyone else at DYA had suggested that he think about joining Opus Dei or even explained to him that some of the young men involved in DYA had decided to dedicate their lives to God in apostolic celibacy. Casciaro felt very content with the progress he had made and had no thought of anything further. He thought he had “arrived at the upper limit, the loftiest spiritual ceiling that one could aspire to.”

During a long, lazy summer spent with many relatives in the province of Alicante, not far from Valencia, the newsletters Casciaro received from DYA and occasional notes from Escrivá helped him to keep up a life of prayer and sacrifice. In the August issue of the newsletter, Escrivá wrote:

Be persevering in your prayer and study. If you do, we can be sure that next year our Lord will give our apostolate a push forward that will be beyond anything we had hoped for. Don’t forget that we still have a lot to do, . . . and it would be terrible

to hear Jesus say what the paralytic said to him at the pool: "*Non habeo hominem.*" I cannot find anyone able to help me.

Casciaro spent part of his time during the summer studying English in order to be able to spread the apostolate to other countries:

Although I did not belong to the Work, in a way I felt part of it; not just one person in a small group owing its existence to particular local conditions of the moment, but part of an incipient apostolic undertaking that would last for all time. The Father shared with us his universal longing for apostolate. At his insistence, we began to pray for the future expansion of the Work. We knew that the learning of languages, such as German and Russian, which he also insisted on, had a compelling apostolic *raison d'être*. Opus Dei had to spread to all four corners of the earth.

When Casciaro returned to Madrid in September, he noticed that a fellow architecture student whom he had introduced to DYA and who had spent the entire summer in Madrid seemed rather pensive. When he asked his friend what was wrong, he responded that he was trying to figure out if God wanted him to be a member of Opus Dei.

Casciaro immediately began to wonder if perhaps God was calling him to Opus Dei. When he raised the question for the first time, Escrivá advised him to rebuild the life of prayer and sacrifice that had grown somewhat cold during the summer and to work very hard at his studies, leaving his concerns about his calling in God's hands.

Toward the beginning of the school year, another architecture student, Francisco Botella, who like Casciaro was combining his architectural studies with a degree in mathematics, asked Casciaro to introduce him to Escrivá. Soon thereafter, Botella began to attend the circles at DYA and to receive spiritual direction from Escrivá.

The November day of recollection in DYA focused on calling.

Escrivá based the first meditation on the passage of the Gospel about the rich young man Christ invited to follow him who went away sad because he was unwilling to give up his possessions. Botella recalls that Escrivá spoke "about sacrifice, about our Lord's cross, and about mortification" and urged the students to seek support and courage in our Lady.

After the day of recollection, Casciaro asked to be allowed to join Opus Dei, but Escrivá advised him to wait a month or so and, in the meantime, to deepen his spiritual life further. Casciaro was unwilling to wait that long and gradually bargained Escrivá down to nine days. Escrivá advised him to make a novena to the Holy Spirit asking for light to discern God's will. Even nine days was too long for Casciaro, who eventually got Escrivá to agree to three days, during which Escrivá urged him to "commend yourself to the Holy Spirit and act in full freedom because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." At the end of the three days, Casciaro wrote a letter to Escrivá asking to join Opus Dei.

In the intervening days, Casciaro had asked his friend Botella what he thought about his desire to join Opus Dei. Botella, who had long had the sense that God was calling him to something, refused to give him any advice, but a few days later he himself also asked to join Opus Dei.

A few months before Casciaro and Botella joined Opus Dei, another civil engineering student, Alvaro del Portillo, had joined. Del Portillo was a handsome, athletic young man from a well-to-do family and a great fan of the bullfights. Escrivá had been praying for him since 1931 when his aunt, who was a volunteer at the Foundation for the Sick, had mentioned her nephew Alvaro when Escrivá asked her whether she knew of any good students who might be interested in some apostolic activities he hoped to organize.

Unlike Casciaro, del Portillo had received a thorough religious education, and he went to Mass and said the rosary almost every day, although he showed little interest in the highly politicized religious associations of students that abounded in Madrid during the early years of the Second Republic. Del Portillo and a number of other students had gotten involved, during the 1933-1934

school year, in the activities of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Vallecas, an extremely poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Madrid. They went there regularly to teach catechism to children and to try to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and the poor.

Some Anarchist and Socialist workers who lived in the neighborhood resented the visits and decided to teach the students a lesson. On Sunday, February 4, 1934, as the group of four or five students walked down the main street of Vallecas, they noticed many more people than usual on the balconies of the apartment buildings that lined the street. People seemed to be waiting for something to happen, and the students soon discovered what it was. They were brutally attacked by fifteen or twenty men who ripped off the ear of one student and hit del Portillo in the head with brass knuckles, opening a large gash in his scalp. The students managed to escape by rushing into a nearby subway station and catching a train that was just about to leave.

The emergency room doctor to whom del Portillo went for first aid was careless in treating the wound, and it became infected. Three months went by before del Portillo recovered fully from the attack.

Another student involved in the Saint Vincent de Paul Society introduced del Portillo to Escrivá in February 1935. Their conversation lasted only a few moments, but, before it ended, Escrivá made an appointment to see del Portillo a few days later. When del Portillo arrived for the appointment, Escrivá was not in and had left no message.

The two did not meet again until the beginning of summer. Del Portillo was preparing to leave Madrid for summer vacation, and he decided to say goodbye to Escrivá before leaving. This time they were able to talk at length, and Escrivá suggested that he put off his departure in order to attend a day of recollection scheduled for the next day at DYA. Del Portillo had never heard of a day of recollection and had no real desire to attend, but he agreed to come. Although they had only talked at any length once, Escrivá saw in del Portillo someone who could understand Opus Dei. During the day of recollection, one of the members of the Work

explained Opus Dei to del Portillo, and he immediately decided to join.

Up to this point, people had joined Opus Dei by simply asking Escrivá to be admitted. Escrivá, however, asked del Portillo to write him a brief letter asking to be admitted as a member of Opus Dei, and from this point on that would be how people joined Opus Dei. Del Portillo's letter was short and to the point, saying little more than that he had learned about the spirit of Opus Dei and wanted to be part of it.

To learn more about his new calling, del Portillo decided to remain in Madrid for the summer. To accommodate him, Escrivá cancelled his plans to take a few days off at the summer home of the vicar general of Madrid. He badly needed a rest after a year of nonstop eighteen-hour days. In addition to his duties as the rector of St. Elizabeth's and visiting the sick, he bore the brunt of the apostolate of Opus Dei. He preached meditations and days of recollection, gave circles and personal spiritual direction to the many people who came to see him, and worked constantly at fostering a family spirit in the academy and residence. He frequently visited people to ask for money for DYA. He also served as a jack-of-all-trades at DYA, teaching a class for a sick professor, washing dishes, and sweeping floors. On top of all of this, he wrote extensively: personal letters, internal instructions for the members of the Work, and books for a wider public. By the beginning of summer, he was so evidently worn out that the vicar general had insisted that he take a few days off, but he decided to stay in the city to give del Portillo his first formation in the spirit of Opus Dei.

Since del Portillo had not attended the circles that had been given during the year, he decided to repeat them during the summer for him. Years later, del Portillo recalled:

He explained the spirit of the Work. More specifically, he advised me to pray many aspirations and spiritual communions and to offer many small mortifications during the day. He told me that some spiritual authors advise people to keep track of how many aspirations they have said during the day by carrying some little pebbles or beans or something like that in

one pocket and moving one to the other pocket each time you lift your heart up to God with one of these prayers. That way you can keep an exact count and see if you are making progress from day to day. The Father told me, however, that he didn't recommend that because of the danger of vanity and pride. "It's better," he said, "to let our Guardian Angel keep track."

Hernández de Garnica soon joined the circle. He had been coming regularly to DYA since his first visit in fall 1934, when Escrivá had put him to work helping install the oratory. During the year, he had attended circles and received spiritual direction from Escrivá. On July 28, 1935, he too joined Opus Dei.

By the end of the 1934-1935 school year, DYA had overcome its initial difficulties. All the resident rooms were taken, and the academy's classes were full. With a total of 125 students enrolled in various classes, the challenge was to find a free room in which to have a circle or simply to talk privately. Escrivá frequently gave spiritual direction walking around Madrid, not so much because he liked to walk as because there was no room in DYA.

Undaunted by the near disaster of the previous year, DYA decided to expand. No more space was available in the building, but they found an apartment a few doors down on the same street. With the help of another infusion of money from the Escrivá family's dwindling inheritance, they rented the apartment at 48 Ferraz Street and moved the academy there in September 1935, thus freeing up all the space in the old locale for the residence.

* * *

By the end of 1935, Opus Dei seemed finally to be poised for significant growth. More important than the success of DYA was the fact that the number of solid members of Opus Dei was growing slowly but steadily. Among the students and young professionals who had joined Opus Dei, there was a solid core who understood well what God wanted Opus Dei to be. They were men of talent and character, many of whom would become leaders in their professions. They had great faith in God and in the

Work and were prepared to sacrifice themselves for it. Most important: they were rapidly becoming the men of prayer who fit Escrivá's description of the members of Opus Dei as "contemplatives in the midst of the world." This was what made it possible for Escrivá to begin planning Opus Dei's expansion to other cities in Spain and to other countries.

Plans for Expansion

 1935-1936

Deteriorating Social and Political Situation

As 1935 progressed, the political and social situation in Spain deteriorated even further. The country was feeling the effects of the worldwide depression, and the parties of the Left were increasingly determined to bring about radical change in Spain. On the Right, extremist parties were growing in size and virulence. The Falange, founded by the son of the former dictator Primo de Rivera, looked to Italian fascism for much of its political vocabulary and style and part of its program. It was becoming a significant factor in political life and on the streets, where its blue-shirted youth confronted the youth groups of the Left in increasingly violent clashes. Financial scandals brought down the center-right government at the end of 1935. Early in 1936, the president of the Republic dissolved the Parliament and called for new general elections.

The working-class parties of the Left and the middle-class parties of the Center-Left united to form a Popular Front. Various factors facilitated the formation of the Spanish Popular Front. The government's repression of the uprising in Asturias provided a rallying point. The Comintern, the international Communist organization directed by Moscow, was encouraging popular fronts throughout Europe to counter the rise of fascism and national socialism. And the electoral disaster of 1933 had taught the parties of the Left the importance of presenting a united front in elections. By contrast, Catholics and other members of the Right and Center-Right were far from presenting a united front in the elections, despite the urging of the cardinal of Toledo to unite in defense of the Church, the family, and the school.

The rhetoric of the electoral campaign further inflamed passions. The Socialist leader, Largo Caballero, declared, "I am a Marxist Socialist, and therefore a revolutionary. Communism is the normal development of socialism, its ultimate and definitive stage." Perhaps even more frightening to conservatives, he publicly declared that "if the Right wins, we will have a civil war."

The Communist party, though still small, multiplied its membership by five in the course of a few months. Its official newspaper called for "completing the bourgeois democratic revolution until it brings us to a situation in which the proletariat and the peasantry themselves assume the responsibility of making the people of Spain as happy and free as the Soviet people." It repeatedly talked about Spain's "undergoing the same historical process as Russia in 1917, . . . a brief transitory phase and then the Soviets."

Although it now seems clear that there was no real probability of a leftist revolution in early 1936, the Spanish Right was convinced that a Communist revolution was imminent. Conservatives drew few distinctions between Communists, Socialists, and Anarchists. All three were "reds," and their victory would bring with it complete social subversion, like that in Russia or, closer to home, like that in Asturias in October 1934.

Unlike British and American conservatives, who have typically been pragmatists, willing to yield to pressure to preserve as much as possible, Spanish conservatives were predominantly unyielding. They believed that an entire way of life was at stake and that the only recipe for survival was resistance—to the death. A political flyer distributed by the right-wing Popular Action captures the tone of early 1936:

Against the revolution and its accomplices! Conservatives, what will happen to you if Marxism triumphs? The dissolution of the Army. The annihilation of the Civil Guard [the national police charged with keeping order in the countryside]. Arming of the rabble. Burning of banks and homes. Distribution of goods and land. Looting. Distribution of your wives. Ruin. Ruin. Ruin.

In terms of popular vote, the 1936 elections represented a modest shift of votes from the Center and Center-Right toward the Center-Left, although the exact details of what happened are unclear. As a result of the balloting, which was generally fair, the Popular Front won something over forty percent of the popular vote, the parties of the Right about thirty percent, and centrist parties about twenty percent. The remaining votes went to candidates who cannot be classified. In many districts, relatively moderate left-wing parties such as the Left-Republicans won the largest number of votes within the Popular Front. Communist candidates invariably came in last among the parties of the Popular Front. On the Right, the extremist Falangist party won less than one half of one percent of the popular vote.

In terms of seats in Parliament, however, the shift was far more dramatic. Thanks to the system of alliances and the workings of the electoral law, the Popular Front won about fifty-six percent of the seats in Parliament. The parties of the Right won thirty percent, leaving a badly fragmented Center with only fourteen percent of the seats and virtually no influence.

The Socialists had participated in the Popular Front, but under the influence of the resolutely Marxist Largo Caballero, they refused to participate in the government formed after the election by the middle-class, Left-Republican Azaña. This meant that the government was clearly middle class and certainly could not be called revolutionary, but the absence of the Socialists in the cabinet also meant that the government was weak. It was unable to resist increasing pressure from the labor unions or to control violence in the streets.

Among the government's first acts was an amnesty for those jailed in the uprisings of October 1934. This amnesty inflamed political passions on the Right. During the spring and early summer of 1936, violence was widespread. Peasants, encouraged by the electoral results, occupied large areas of land in the south. In the cities, attacks on public and private buildings, especially churches, became common. General strikes and riots broke out frequently. Armed right-wing squads patrolled the streets in Madrid and other cities, often shooting at random from passing

cars. Between February 3, 1936, and the beginning of the civil war on July 17, 1936, approximately 270 people were killed and almost 1,300 wounded in political incidents and assassinations. Violence was not confined to one area; about 150 were killed in the cities, but another 120 died in small towns and rural areas.

Even before the elections, the Escrivá family had temporarily moved to a boardinghouse, out of fear that St. Elizabeth's might be assaulted at any moment. In view of the electoral results, they decided it was not safe to return to the rector's residence. They rented a small apartment on Doctor Cárceles Street, while Escrivá moved to the DYA residence.

Their fears proved to be well founded. On March 13, 1936, a mob tried to set St. Elizabeth's ablaze. They ran out of gasoline, and, while they were looking for more, the police came along and dispersed them before they could do significant damage. Escrivá wrote in his notes:

People are very pessimistic. I cannot lose my faith and my hope that are consequences of my love. . . . In St. Elizabeth's, there are plenty of scares. I don't know why the nuns don't have heart conditions. Today, hearing them all talking about assassinations of priests and nuns, about arsons and assaults and other horrors . . . , I was scared. Panic is contagious, and I felt fear for a moment. I will not have pessimists all around me. We must serve God with joy and abandonment.

Plans for Expansion

Escrivá was normally not distracted from his apostolic tasks by the difficult circumstances of the country. Although DYA had only about half as many students in the academy during the 1935–1936 school year as it had had the previous year, by early 1936 Escrivá was already planning to purchase a larger facility for the upcoming school year. Not content with expanding DYA, on February 13, 1936, he noted, “I feel an urgent need to open houses outside Madrid and outside Spain. I sense that Jesus wants us to go to Valencia [in the east of Spain] and to Paris. . . . A campaign

of prayer and sacrifice that will be the foundation of these two houses is already under way.”

As early as 1934, he had told the vicar general of Madrid that the students involved in DYA hoped to establish similar centers near the principal universities in foreign countries. Early in 1936, he wrote to the auxiliary bishop of Valencia telling him about his plans for opening a center there. He also wrote to the vicar general of Madrid to inform him that he hoped to have a house in Valencia by the end of the summer and was preparing a small group to go to Paris.

Meanwhile, he was working on writing a set of instructions for those who would direct Opus Dei's activities in those first two outposts, as well as in the centers throughout the world that he dreamed about. The “Instruction for Directors” urges them to see their task as a service. “I have frequently told you that ‘the way to be useful is to serve,’ because this phrase sums up a large part of our spirit: service to God, I repeat, to his holy church, and to the Roman Pontiff, and service to all souls.” The instruction touches on many points, but its fundamental theme is the need for personal holiness:

I remind the local directors that as they give themselves to the others in formative and apostolic tasks they should not forget that their own interior life is always the most important thing for them and for the Work. All our external and internal work, and especially that of the directors, must be based on a solid piety.

In April 1936, Escrivá went to Valencia with Vallespín, the director of DYA, to talk with the auxiliary bishop and to give him copies of the various instructions he had written for the members of the Work. These contacts with the hierarchy were not only necessary preparations for the planned expansion, but also a way for Escrivá to burn his bridges behind him. Having officially informed both the auxiliary bishop of Valencia and the vicar general of Madrid about his plans, he would look quite foolish if he failed to carry them out.

Those plans were based on trust in God. Bishop José López Ortiz, an Augustinian friar and university professor who had met Escrivá in 1924 in Zaragoza, describes a conversation he had with him in Madrid in the spring of 1936:

He did not speak to me explicitly about the Work, but he asked me with great faith to pray a lot for him, because our Lord was asking from him something that vastly exceeded his strength. He alluded generically to the fact that our Lord was sending him a great trial. He felt like an instrument in God's hands. He was ready to do whatever God wanted and was carrying out a loving struggle not to obstruct in any way the fulfillment of God's will. In that struggle, our Lord was taking him down an extraordinarily painful path. Our Lord had shown him what he wanted of him and his life. He saw his vocation very clearly. He considered that it was well beyond his possibilities, but he was determined to follow it with complete fidelity, surrounded by difficulties. . . .

Seeing him that day without the cheerfulness that characterized his entire life, I was left with the picture of a man who suffers but is ready to do the will of God, knowing that he is nothing and less than nothing, a mere instrument. This humble attitude—and I would even say humiliated attitude—is diametrically opposed to any type of triumphalism. It has always been hidden in him, like the root of a tree, giving weight and meaning to the constant cheerfulness and overflowing optimism that are possible only with submissive acceptance of the cross.

Vehicles for Expansion

In preparation for the planned expansion to Valencia and the growth of activities in Madrid with professors and other people who had already graduated from the university, the members of the Work decided to form two corporations. The first, Sociedad de Colaboración Intelectual (Society for Intellectual Cooperation),

would organize conferences and other activities for university graduates who would eventually form the nucleus of Opus Dei's apostolic activities with married people. Escrivá referred to those activities as the Work of St. Gabriel. In times of political tension and frequent police raids on meetings of more than a few people, it was necessary to have an entity recognized by the civil authorities that could organize meetings of various sorts without arousing suspicion.

Opus Dei could not do this itself, because it still had no formal existence, either in the eyes of the Church or in the eyes of the civil authorities. The Society for Intellectual Cooperation was not formed, however, only because Opus Dei was not yet in a position to sponsor the activities. The role of Opus Dei is limited strictly to the spiritual sphere: to giving doctrinal and spiritual formation and support to its own members and to others who are interested in coming closer to God in their daily lives. Members of Opus Dei would organize, together with other people, a broad range of classes and seminars on historical or cultural topics and a host of other activities not directly related to Opus Dei's spiritual aims. They would do so, however, either in their personal capacity or through lay secular foundations like the Society for Intellectual Cooperation, because such activities were theirs rather than Opus Dei's.

The second corporation, Fomento de Estudios Superiores (Foundation to Promote Higher Education), was intended to be the entity that would rent or purchase the property needed for the new center in Valencia and for other future apostolic projects. The reasoning was not merely that Opus Dei was not yet in a position to buy or rent the properties but that it had no interest in owning or leasing property itself, though it would, of course, need space in which to carry out its formational activities. Such activities were better carried out by ordinary for-profit or not-for-profit corporations that included the owning or leasing of property among their corporate aims. It was not a question of Opus Dei's not wanting to be seen but rather of its not wanting to be involved in activities which, although perfectly legitimate, did not directly pertain to its spiritual mission.

The Descent into Chaos

As spring progressed, the political climate grew increasingly tense. Although nothing was known for certain, virtually everyone suspected, as it turned out correctly, that the army was planning a coup. Labor unions and political parties on the extreme Left and Right were busy organizing and arming private militias, which clashed with each other and sowed a climate of fear and violence in the streets. In the Parliament, the debates grew increasingly heated. On April 15, the secretary general of the Communist party openly threatened the assassination of the leader of the right-wing CEDA: "I cannot say for sure how Mr. Gil Robles will die," he said, "but I can say that if the people's justice is fulfilled, he will die with his shoes on." The Right was increasingly violent in its denunciations of the government for its failure to preserve law and order and for pandering to the extreme Left. In the streets, youths armed by parties on the extreme Right and the extreme Left clashed frequently, and political assassinations were common.

In April, the Spanish Parliament, the Cortes, voted to remove the president of the Republic, and in early May, Azaña was elected to replace him. The new government, headed by Casares Quiroga, continued to be dominated by middle-class Left-Republicans. The new prime minister, however, lacked Azaña's authority and prestige, and the new government was even weaker than its predecessor.

New Members and Zorzano's Move to Madrid

Despite this unfavorable atmosphere, Escrivá took advantage of the absence of many residents during the Easter break to preach a retreat in DYA in April. This was the first time a retreat was held in an Opus Dei center. During the retreat, as in the monthly days of recollection, Escrivá stressed the need for study as well as for piety if the participants were to bring the salt and light of Christ to society. He was painfully aware of the crises racking Spanish society, but he encouraged the students not to let themselves become so absorbed in political activities that they failed to

prepare professionally and spiritually for the role that awaited them in society. Without undervaluing the need to seek solutions to social and political problems, he urged them to focus on their spiritual roots. "These world crises," he told them, "are crises of saints. God wants a handful of men 'of his own' in every human activity. And then . . . '*pax Christi in regno Christi* the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ.'"

In the midst of the political and social turmoil of the spring of 1936, the prayer, sacrifice, and apostolic efforts of Escrivá and the other members of the Work were rewarded. In mid-April, Vicente Rodriguez Casado, who was studying both law and history at the University of Madrid, joined Opus Dei. A few days later, during a trip to Valencia, Escrivá looked up a young philosophy student, Rafael Calvo Serer, one of the officers of the Catholic University Students Association in Valencia. During March, Calvo Serer had visited Escrivá several times in Madrid while on a trip to the capital on business of the Association. On March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, Escrivá had explained Opus Dei to him and had suggested that he think about his possible vocation. On that occasion Calvo had responded, only half in jest, "You'll snag me in your nets yet." After a long conversation with Escrivá while walking through the streets of Valencia, he too joined the Work.

By the middle of 1936, Opus Dei had grown to nineteen members. Escrivá was overjoyed at the new vocations, but he needed help from the older members to expand the Work's apostolates. He was especially anxious to be able to rely more heavily on Zorzano, who had been living in Málaga since he joined Opus Dei. In recent months, Zorzano's situation there had become increasingly difficult. The city was a hotbed of radical left-wing labor activity. By and large, the men who worked directly for him respected him and appreciated his fairness and the personal interest he took in them. But as an engineer and as a known Catholic, Zorzano was a target of hostility for workers who did not know him personally. One day a former student of his at the Technical School informed him that a group of Communist and Anarchist workers were plotting his death. To stay much longer in Málaga would not be prudent.

This was not the first time that Zorzano had thought of moving to Madrid. For several years, he had been looking for a position there, because he felt the need for closer contact with Escrivá and the other members of the Work. In the midst of the depression, however, he had not been able to find a job. The planned expansion of DYA and the projected opening of an academy and residence in Valencia finally provided Zorzano an opportunity to work in Madrid.

Vallespín would move to Valencia to start the academy and residence there, and Zorzano would become the director of the enlarged residence in Madrid and head up a new section of engineering studies in the academy. The position as director of DYA was not economically attractive, but a relative was planning to open a business in Madrid that would give him an opportunity to supplement his income and make ends meet. Zorzano accepted DYA's offer and moved to Madrid in early June, because the position, however poorly paid, offered an opportunity to put to use his technical background and his experience as a teacher. It would also permit him to contribute more directly to the apostolate of Opus Dei in Madrid.

Difficulties in the Apostolate with Priests and Women

The plans for the expansion of DYA and the beginning of activities in Valencia and Paris reflected the slow but healthy growth of Opus Dei's apostolate with college students and recent graduates. However, its apostolate with priests and with women was not going as well.

In 1934, a number of priests had made a commitment to obey Escrivá in matters related to the Work. Although this seemed to be an important step in their gradual incorporation into Opus Dei, they did not fully appreciate the supernatural origin of the Work or Escrivá's role as its founder. His determination to press forward with DYA despite financial difficulties struck a number of them as foolhardy. More importantly, they tended to go their own way and to give little weight to what Escrivá told them about the spirit of the Work.

The basic problem, he soon concluded, was that, except for a few, "they have little supernatural vision, and little love for the Work. For them it is a foster child, whereas for me it is the soul of my soul." Escrivá decided to "try to get them to do as much as possible until I can see if they mature in the spirit of the Work."

Rather than improving, things deteriorated. By March 1935, it was no longer possible to have the priests' Monday meetings, which had been held weekly since 1931. Both Escrivá's spiritual director, Fr. Sánchez, and his close friend, Fr. Poveda, advised Escrivá to break off relations with the other priests, but he could not bring himself to do that. In light of their virtues and "undeniable good faith," he decided "to bear with them, but on the margins of the activities of Opus Dei, asking them to help out whenever necessary with their priestly ministry."

Even in this limited capacity, however, they were a source of confusion for the lay members of the Work, to the point that Escrivá sometimes referred to them as his "crown of thorns." Eventually, he decided to dispense with their help altogether and call upon other priests who had no connection with the Work when someone was needed to say Mass or to hear confessions. Escrivá concluded that Opus Dei would need priests recruited from among its lay members and formed in its spirit from the beginning of their vocation. As yet, he had no idea how that could be done within the restrictions that Church law put on the types of organizations that could call someone to the priesthood. He was so convinced, however, that a way would be found that in May 1936 he asked some members of the Work if they would be willing to be ordained if he called them to the priesthood.

The apostolate with women did not fare much better than that with priests. As time went by, a number of women did join Opus Dei, but they found it very difficult to grasp fully its spirit. A large part of the problem was due to their limited contact with Escrivá. He did meet with them from time to time at the convent of St. Elizabeth, and after the tabernacle was installed in the oratory at the DYA residence, he occasionally gave them a meditation when the residents were out of the house. In general, however, he rarely

saw them outside of the confessional, where he provided spiritual direction.

There were several reasons for this limited contact. Escrivá's other activities were already so demanding that he had very little time. In addition, there was no setting in which he could see them easily. And even if he could have found a solution to these problems, as a young priest who was determined to avoid everything that might endanger his vocation to give his heart and affection entirely to God, Escrivá was loath to maintain close personal contacts with young women.

As a result, Escrivá entrusted most of the women members to Fr. Vea-Murguía, a priest of the diocese of Madrid. He had served as one of the chaplains of the Foundation for the Sick from 1927 to 1932 and as chaplain of the Servants of the Sacred Heart from 1932 until his assassination during the early days of the civil war. It turned out, however, that Fr. Vea-Murguía himself had not fully grasped the spirit of Opus Dei and thus was not able to transmit it clearly to others. For this reason, the few women members still had not grasped the essence of Opus Dei when the outbreak of the civil war completely cut them off from Escrivá. As one of them, Felisa Alcolea, commented years later, "The truth is we had goodwill, but nothing else."

The First Pilgrimage

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin played a large part in the original plan of life that Escrivá outlined for the members of Opus Dei. It included daily recitation of the rosary and of the Angelus as well as other practices of Marian devotion. Escrivá felt the need, however, for some concrete way of living devotion to Mary during May, the month the Church has traditionally dedicated to her. The solution he found grew out of an incident in the life of Opus Dei.

Fernandez Vallespín mentioned to Escrivá that during the summer of 1933 an attack of rheumatism had threatened to prevent him from finishing a project that was a prerequisite for registering for the last year of architecture. Not completing the project on time

would have meant losing the entire 1933-1934 school year. He had prayed to our Lady and had promised her that if he was able to complete the project successfully, he would make a pilgrimage to the small shrine of Sonsoles, located a few hours from Madrid on the outskirts of the city of Avila. He had successfully completed the project before joining Opus Dei but had not yet fulfilled his promise. Escrivá offered to make a pilgrimage with him, not as part of a large group but only the two of them and Barredo.

On May 2, 1935, they took the train from Madrid to Avila and then walked the two and a half miles to the shrine, reciting five mysteries of the rosary on the way. The shrine was visible in the distance, on the top of a small hill. At one point, however, they briefly lost sight of it. Escrivá found in this incident a parable of the spiritual life. "When we lose God's light, the ability to see things from a supernatural perspective, we have to recall that we once had it. We should continue moving forward, without growing fainthearted, although we are going uphill in the dark."

At the shrine, they prayed another five mysteries of the rosary; and on the way back to the train station, they prayed the remaining five. The road took them through fields of ripe winter wheat. Escrivá plucked a few shafts of the wheat as he "remembered a part of the Gospel where Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do you not say, There are yet four months and then comes the harvest? Well, I say to you: lift up your eyes and behold that the fields are already white for the harvest' (Jn 4:35). And I realized again that our Lord wanted to put the same yearning into our hearts as he had in his own."

Reflecting on the experience of this visit to Sonsoles, Escrivá decided that a quiet pilgrimage of this sort, in the company of one or two friends, would be a good way for members of Opus Dei to honor the Blessed Virgin in the month of May and to help their friends be more devoted to her.

The Last Weeks before the Civil War

As spring turned into early summer, the political climate continued to deteriorate. People everywhere talked incessantly about

plots against the government by the Right, with the backing of the army, or by the labor unions and parties of the Left, with the support of their private militias. By early June, a group of army officers led by General Mola had all but completed its plans for overthrowing the government. They would establish a military government made up of General Sanjurjo, who had led the right-wing coup attempt in 1932, and four other senior officers. Once they were firmly in power, they would call a constituent assembly to write a new constitution. Other than restoring order, their political goals were vague, but they seem to have envisioned a government somewhat like that of General Primo de Rivera.

Without betraying the conspirators' plans, on June 23, 1936, General Franco wrote to the prime minister. He protested against the removal of several right-wing generals from their commands and warned Casares Quiroga that the "discipline of the army" was in danger. The prime minister never responded.

On July 1, 1936, the press reported, in banner headlines, that a prominent Socialist deputy had publicly issued a death threat against the right-wing leader Calvo Sotelo. Less than two weeks later, government security forces assassinated Calvo Sotelo and dumped his body along a road outside the cemetery of Madrid.

Like most Spaniards, the members of Opus Dei watched in horror as their country spiraled downward into violence, but they did not allow themselves to become paralyzed by anxiety. Just as Zorzano was arriving in Madrid, the search for a new home for DYA bore fruit. They found a suitable house at 16 Ferraz Street, near the previous site. On June 17, 1936, they signed a contract for the purchase, and at the beginning of July, they began relocating. By July 15, the move was complete, although much remained to be done in the house. They continued to work on preparing the new residence at the same time as they redoubled their prayer and sacrifice for a peaceful solution to the crisis.

* * *

The members' hopes for prompt growth and expansion of their apostolic activities would soon be shattered by the outbreak of a civil war that would last for almost three years. The war and the

religious persecution that accompanied it dispersed the members of Opus Dei. Two of the young men who had recently joined, José Isasa and Jacinto Valentin Gamazo, died during the conflict, and some other young men did not persevere in the Work under the harsh conditions of war. When the fighting finally came to an end, fewer men belonged to Opus Dei than when the conflict began, and its only center was reduced to a heap of rubble. The trials of war and religious persecution, however, strengthened and tempered the vocation of those men who persevered, laying the groundwork for a new period of expansion of Opus Dei's activities for men.

The civil war was even more devastating for Opus Dei's still incipient activities with women. The handful of young women who belonged to the Work in July 1936 were cut off from Escrivá during almost three years. They had not yet fully grasped the spirit of Opus Dei when the conflict began, and by the end of the fighting they had directed their lives in other directions. When peace finally returned to Spain in April 1939, Escrivá reluctantly concluded that none of them was in a position to continue in Opus Dei. The only women member on whom Escrivá could count for restarting Opus Dei's apostolic activities was Lola Fisac, who had joined the Work during the war.

The available sources are almost completely silent about the experiences of the few women who belonged to Opus Dei at the beginning of the war. The following chapters will, therefore, necessarily focus exclusively on men.

The next chapter outlines the dramatic events that formed the background of Opus Dei's history during the period from July 1936 to March 1937.

First Stages of the Civil War

🌿 JULY 1936—MARCH 1937

Military Uprising

The assassination of Calvo Sotelo by government agents confirmed the view of the military conspirators and their civilian supporters that the government was either unwilling or unable to control the situation, and that Spain was rapidly descending into chaos and revolution. The conspirators' final plans called for a military uprising on July 18, 1936, which they hoped would quickly put them in control of the government. Initially the military rebels and their civilian supporters had no name for their movement, but within a few weeks they began to call themselves "Nationalists."

The civil war actually began one day ahead of schedule, on July 17, 1936, with an uprising by military units in Spanish Morocco. It soon spread to the rest of the country. The leaders were primarily younger officers, because most of the senior generals either opposed the revolt or were undecided. Significant parts of the Army and a majority of the Air Force and Navy refused to join the officers who had risen against the government. In many areas, the militarized police (the Civil Guards and Assault Guards) fought vigorously against the army units that had joined the revolt.

Unnerved by the military uprising against his government, Casares Quiroga resigned as prime minister. His replacement, the moderate Republican Martínez Barrios, tried to reach a compromise with the Nationalist leaders. His efforts failed, and, within hours, he was replaced as prime minister by José Giral, a relatively obscure Left-Republican professor who had served as minister of

the Navy. Giral formed a new government made up entirely of middle-class liberals, but it had the explicit support of Socialists, Anarchists, and Communists. On July 19, 1936, Giral, urged by his Socialist and Anarchist backers, took the momentous step of "arming the population" by issuing weapons to the members of Socialist and Anarchist militia units. This decision pushed many ambivalent army units into the arms of the Nationalists.

By July 20, 1936, the country was more or less clearly divided into two zones. Forces opposed to the revolt and nominally loyal to the Republican government occupied approximately two thirds of the territory, including most of the Atlantic coast and the entire Mediterranean coast except for an area near Cádiz. They held all the principal cities and industrial centers, with the exception of Zaragoza in the north and Seville and Cordoba in the south. The Nationalists had gained the upper hand in a large part of the northern half of the country with the exception of the Catalan provinces in the northeast and the strip along the Atlantic coast that comprised the Basque Provinces, Santander, and Oviedo. In the south, they held only small enclaves around Seville and Cordoba and a strategically important area around Cádiz, which would permit them to move troops into the peninsula from Spain's North African possessions, which they also controlled.

International Aspects of the Civil War

The civil war rapidly became an international event. Both sides promptly sought arms and assistance from the countries they thought would be sympathetic to their cause. During the course of the conflict, both sides received significant aid that helped shape the war.

In the early days of the war, Franco and other rebel leaders turned to Germany and Italy for arms, while the Republic sought assistance from France. Hitler promptly provided bombers which would prove invaluable in ferrying the Army of Africa across the straits from Morocco to southern Spain and fighter aircraft to protect them. He also sent some anti-aircraft guns,



Division of Spain during the Civil War.

machine guns, and rifles. A few days later, Mussolini provided aircraft as well.

The French Socialist prime minister, Leon Blum, who headed a popular front government, was sympathetic to the Spanish Popular Front but worried about provoking French Catholics and other segments of the French Right. He was also determined not to alienate the British government, which preferred not to get involved in the Spanish conflict. Although he decided not to provide any official aid to the Republic, Blum did allow some aircraft and arms to reach Spain through unofficial private routes.

In 1936, the Soviet Union's chief foreign concern was Nazi Germany. Stalin adopted a conciliatory attitude toward Great Britain and France, in the hope of winning their support in any conflict with Germany. He also directed the Comintern and Communist parties throughout Europe to work with Socialist and other left-wing parties in Western Europe to form a united bloc, known as the Popular Front, against Nazism. The Soviet Union provided some financial aid and used its worldwide propaganda network to drum up support for the Republic. However, it did not initially send arms to Spain.

On July 30, 1936, an Italian bomber crashed in French Morocco while en route to Spanish Morocco. This alerted the world to the fact that Italy was providing war materiel to the rebels. Paris and London responded by calling for international nonintervention in Spain, and soon all the principal European powers had joined a nonintervention agreement. Despite the agreement, Italy and Germany continued to provide growing quantities of aid to the rebels. In October 1936, the Soviet Union began providing arms to the Republic. In addition, the Comintern promoted the International Brigades, which fought effectively for the Republic.

During the course of the war, both sides received significant foreign assistance, although historians disagree over the amounts. Estimates of the airplanes received by the Republic range from 1,200 to 1,800, while the number of airplanes received by the Nationalists has been placed between 1,250 and 1,500. Estimates of the numbers of foreigners who served the Republic in the International Brigades range from a low of 30,000 to a high of 100,000.

More than 75,000 Italians and approximately 15,000 Germans fought for the Nationalists. Certain types of Soviet aid, especially tanks, were very effective. In general, however, aid from Germany and Italy to Franco was somewhat larger and much more effective than the aid received by the Republic from the Soviet Union and elsewhere.

Revolution and Anticlerical Violence in Republican Spain

The Nationalist uprising and the government's response to it brought about the revolution that the military leaders had feared and that their movement was intended to head off. Concretely, Giral's decision to give out arms to Socialist and Anarchist militia units helped prevent a quick Nationalist victory, but it led to an almost complete breakdown of government.

Only in Madrid did the government retain any control over events, and even there its orders were ignored more often than not. Militia units and popular tribunals quickly took control of cities, towns, and country villages in the areas where the Nationalist movement initially failed. Republican legality collapsed in the face of a full-scale social revolution. As the most prominent Spanish Communist orator of the time, La Pasionaria, put it, "The whole state apparatus was destroyed, and state power lay in the streets." Although the Giral government laid claim to being the legal government of Spain and presented its followers as "loyalists," it bore little resemblance to the liberal parliamentary government foreseen in the Republican constitution. Nonetheless, the forces opposed to the Nationalists are usually called "Republicans."

It was to take the central government months to regain control of the streets in Madrid and the other parts of the country where the Nationalist movement had failed. In the early months of the war, revolutionary committees, whose composition varied from province to province, had far greater influence and power than the central government. Republican Spain became de facto a confederation of regions governed, to the extent that they were governed at all, by Socialist and Anarchist trade unions and their militias, working through juntas of various sorts.

The collapse of governmental control in the Republican zone was accompanied by an outbreak of terror. It was primarily the work of small groups from the revolutionary parties who organized themselves for this purpose. In Madrid, however, some of the killing was carried out by police units at least nominally controlled by the Republican government. Neither in Madrid nor elsewhere did the government initially make any serious effort to stop the violence.

Much of the terror took the form of attacks on the Catholic Church and its ministers. Between July 18 and July 31, 1936, fifty priests were assassinated in Madrid and a third of the capital's one hundred fifty churches were sacked or burned. Anti-Catholic violence continued unabated through August in much of the Republican zone. During that month, more than two thousand priests and religious were killed. The violence against priests, religious, and others known as Catholics gradually tapered off after August 1936, although specific assassinations of priests and religious continued until the end of the war. By the end of the war, twelve bishops, more than 4,000 diocesan priests, and more than 2,500 religious had been killed. One of every seven diocesan priests and one of every five male members of religious orders died. In Escrivá's home diocese of Barbastro, 123 of 140 priests were murdered. It is impossible to say exactly how many lay men and women were killed just because they were known as Catholics, but the number is large. Many of the victims were executed after summary trials before "people's courts" set up by Anarchists, Socialists, Communists, and members of other left-wing parties. Others were simply lynched.

The terror of summer 1936 was accompanied by economic revolution. Workers' militias and union groups seized control of whatever they found useful. In some areas, unions took de facto control of factories and other economic resources. In Madrid and its environs, where the government had somewhat more authority than elsewhere, about a third of all industry was brought under governmental control and directed to production of war materiel. In the countryside, Socialist and Anarchist unions seized large tracts of land. Often peasants continued to work the land on much

the same terms as before, except that ultimate control now lay with a union rather than with a private landowner. In eastern Spain, hundreds of agrarian collectives were formed, each following a different pattern.

The Giral Government and the Revolution

The Giral government faced a dilemma. It needed to restore governmental authority, both for its own sake and to avoid alienating its Western European backers. But it also needed to retain the support of the leftists on whom it depended. Privately, many members of the government were disturbed by the violence in the areas nominally under their control, but they lacked the means to stop it and were afraid even to speak out against it for fear of losing the support of the Socialists, Anarchists, and Communists.

The Giral government did not merely fail to condemn the violence taking place in the areas it nominally controlled. Some of its official measures could actually be seen as validating attacks on the Church. On July 27, 1936, for instance, the government ordered the immediate occupation of all buildings that had been used for educational purposes by religious orders and congregations. A decree issued on August 11, 1936, ordered the closing of all religious establishments whose owners had directly or indirectly favored the military uprising in any way. These decrees did not explicitly sanction assassinations of priests and religious or other violence against persons. They could, however, easily be interpreted as legalizing the attacks on Church property that were taking place throughout the Republican zone, and some saw them as indirect indications that the government approved violence against Catholics.

The Republican government had little more control over the army than over civilians. Although a large part of the regular army had not joined the revolt, the units available to the Republic were quickly submerged by the Socialist, Anarchist, and Communist militias that dominated the Republic's military efforts. Many professional officers supported the Republic and were willing to serve it, but political mistrust kept the Republican government

from using them effectively. Consequently, militia units lacked the skills, organization, and leadership they needed. In the open field, they were unable to resist the smaller, but better organized and better led, Nationalist units that were drawing ever closer to Madrid. Communist militias were better organized and disciplined than Socialist or Anarchist ones, but they too lacked the fighting skills of regular army units led by trained officers. Even more serious than the deficiencies of individual militia units were their lack of coordination and consequent inability to carry out large-scale plans. The Giral government did not dare, however, to reorganize the armed forces along more traditional lines, because military discipline was anathema to the Anarchists and to many Socialists.

Economic revolution in the countryside presented a similar dilemma. Many of the peasant supporters of the Republic in central and northern Spain were fiercely attached to their small plots of land, even though they were economically inefficient. On the other hand, landless farm laborers, who also constituted a large part of the Republic's rural support in the south, were clamoring for radical agrarian reform. Giral's legalization of the seizure of properties "abandoned" by their owners and his measures providing for the acquisition of legal title by long-term tenants were insufficient to satisfy his more radical supporters, but he was afraid to go any further for fear of alienating small-scale proprietors, as well as France and England.

The Military Struggle for Madrid

Nationalist leaders had hoped that resistance to their uprising might collapse in two or three days, but they had realized from the beginning that they might easily fail in Madrid. In that case, they would need to isolate and reduce the capital with attacks from the north and south. This, they thought, might take several weeks.

Plans for attacks from the north were quickly put into effect. By July 22, 1936, a column coming down from Burgos had reached the Somosierra Pass, twenty-five miles north of Madrid, where the road crosses the Guadarrama mountains. Another column com-

ing down from Valladolid had reached the Alto de León pass, twenty miles northeast of Madrid. Both columns, however, were brought to a halt in heavy fighting.

The plans for attacking the capital from the south focused on the elite Army of Africa, comprised of about 30,000 Spaniards and 10,000 Moroccans, mostly volunteers. They were the best-trained and best-equipped units of the Spanish army. At first, however, Republican control of the Mediterranean kept them bottled up in North Africa. Only gradually, with the help of Italian and German aircraft, was General Francisco Franco, who had taken command of the Army of Africa, able to transport his units to southern Spain.

During August and September, the troops of the Army of Africa, joined by soldiers from some garrisons in the south of Spain and by Falangist and other rightist volunteers, fought their way north along the Portuguese border and then turned northeast toward Madrid. By mid-August, they met up with Nationalist forces coming down from the north along the Portuguese border. This campaign to conquer and occupy southwestern and west-central Spain took up the first six weeks of the war.

As Franco drew nearer to Madrid, Republican resistance stiffened, aided by control of the air. A Nationalist diversion to relieve the garrison of Toledo, which had been holding out under siege for two months, further delayed Franco's advance. When the direct assault on Madrid finally began, on November 8, 1936, it met determined resistance from popular militias, Communist-organized International Brigades, and units of the newly formed People's Army, strengthened by Soviet tanks and aircraft. By November 21, 1936, the combined Republican forces brought to a halt the Nationalist attack on the capital from the south.

After the failure of their assault on Madrid from the south, the Nationalists tried three times between late November 1936 and early January 1937 to take the capital from the north. Despite support from German planes and artillery and Italian light tanks, those attacks also failed. The Nationalists next attempted to cut off the city with an attack in the Jarama Valley, southeast of Madrid. The goal of the Jarama offensive, which began on February 6,

1937, was not to occupy the city directly but to block the road between Madrid and Valencia, isolating the capital. The battle of the Jarama was the first large-scale battle of the war. In two weeks of heavy fighting, the Republicans suffered 25,000 casualties and the Nationalists 20,000. The Nationalists advanced almost ten miles along a fifteen-mile-wide front but failed to cut the Madrid-Valencia highway.

In March 1937, in yet another attempt to isolate the capital, four Italian Fascist divisions, sent by Mussolini to help the Nationalists, attacked from the north in the direction of Guadalajara. After initial advances, the Fascists were pushed back by Republican forces, including the Garibaldi Brigade, made up of anti-Fascist Italians, supported by Russian tanks and aircraft. The failure of the Guadalajara offensive marked the end of the Nationalists' attempts to capture or cut off Madrid.

The Military Revolt Becomes the "National Movement"

Within a week of the Nationalist uprising, General Mola set up a seven-member junta of national defense. General Sanjurjo, the most senior general among the Nationalists and leader of the failed coup attempt in 1932, was slated to be the president of the junta and the overall leader of the uprising, but he died in a plane crash on his way to Spain. The largely honorary presidency of the junta then fell to the next senior officer among the rebel leaders, General Cabanellas, an elderly Mason and well-known liberal who had served in the Cortes as a deputy.

At first, the military revolt lacked any well-defined political program beyond reestablishing law and order under a military government. Except in Navarra, where the Carlist monarchists were strong, the Nationalists had no particular desire to bring back the monarchy. The semi-fascist Falange had little power or influence anywhere in the country. Many early Nationalist proclamations ended with *Viva la República*, although the republic the rebels had in mind was more authoritarian than the liberal parliamentary regime established by the constitution adopted in 1931.

Nationalist leaders initially were even further from having well-

defined cultural goals than they were from having a clear political plan. Reaction to the on-going revolution in the Republican zone, however, stimulated a cultural counterrevolution. The rejection of the liberal values and institutions of the Enlightenment and the restoration of traditional values and attitudes served as the emotional and ideological support of the Nationalist cause during the long civil war.

Religious revivalism played a prominent part in the cultural counterrevolution, although it too was foreign to the early plans of the leaders of the military uprising. Their initial proclamations said nothing about defending the Church or religion. In one of his earliest statements, General Mola declared that "the Church ought to be separated from the State for the good of both institutions." Even as late as October 1, 1936, General Franco said that the State would not be confessional. Supporters of the Falange desired amicable Church-State relations but wanted a clear separation of the two. The nominal leader of the junta of national defense, General Cabanellas, was a well-known member of the anticlerical Radical party.

Despite the initial absence of religious elements in the plans of Nationalist military leaders, persecution of the Church in the Republican zone rallied a vast majority of practicing Catholics to the Nationalist cause. At first, Church leaders were cautious in their statements. Pope Pius XI was well disposed toward those who defended the Church against one of the most bitter persecutions it had ever suffered, but he was reluctant to take sides officially. In a private audience in September 1936, he spoke of the victims of religious persecution as martyrs and gave his blessing to those who were striving to defend religion. He focused, however, on the religious aspects of the conflict, "over and above all political and worldly considerations," and warned against the dangers of unjustifiable excesses, while calling for compassion and mercy. Press censors in the Nationalist zone suppressed parts of the text before allowing it to be published.

The Spanish hierarchy issued no sweeping collective statements in favor of the Nationalists in the early stages of the war. By fall 1936, however, prominent bishops, especially the primate and

archbishop of Toledo, Cardinal Gomá, had openly embraced the Nationalist cause. In a pastoral letter issued at the end of November 1936, Gomá described the conflict as “a war waged by the Christian and Spanish spirit against another spirit. . . .”

Although most of the Nationalist leaders were far more interested in law and order than in religion or culture, they were quick to take advantage of these sources of popular support. By mid-August 1936, General Mola pledged to raise over the new state “the cross that was and remains the symbol of our religion and our faith.”

The only significant exception to the general rule of Catholic support for the Nationalists was in the Basque country. Many devout Catholic Basques, including Basque priests, supported the Republic. Most of them were traditionalists, who might have been expected to support the Nationalists for political as well as religious reasons, but their desire for Basque autonomy outweighed other considerations. In return for an autonomy statute for the Basque country, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) joined the Caballero government in September 1936. In response, the Nationalists expelled the bishop of Victoria. They complained that he had not disciplined the pro-Republican clergy of his dioceses, even though he generally supported the Nationalist cause. In October 1936, the Nationalists executed twelve Basque priests for political crimes. During the entire course of the war, the Nationalists executed fourteen Basque priests, and the Republicans fifty-eight.

By August 1936, the insurgents had begun to call their movement “Nationalist,” but most of the prominent leaders of the movement had little enthusiasm for the doctrines of the Falange, the National Socialist party in Germany, or other radical “Nationalist” movements in Europe. They intended to maintain an all-military government until the end of the civil war, but they had no clear plans for the more distant future beyond a vague conservative authoritarianism.

The Nationalists faced significant civilian opposition, even in the northern provinces where their uprising met with initial success and where they probably enjoyed the support of the majority of the population. In the impoverished areas of the south and

southwest, which the Nationalists conquered during the first few months of the war, a large portion of the population bitterly opposed them.

Opponents faced brutal repression. Historians have debated at length about the extent of the repression by the two sides. One carefully conducted study recently concluded that during the war there were 70,000 executions in the Republican zone and 40,000 in the Nationalist zone, with another 30,000 carried out by the Franco government between the end of the war and 1950. It seems unlikely that there will be consensus on the numbers, but clearly large numbers of civilians were killed, and horrors and atrocities abounded on both sides.

The harshness of the repression practiced by both sides was partially based on the need to pacify areas in which popular resistance could be expected. Additionally, the intense ideological conflicts of the preceding years had served to demonize opponents and thus to justify in the minds of many even the most extreme measures. This, combined with the horror caused by the violence against churches and churchmen in the Republican zone, helps explain the public silence of many Church leaders in the face of Nationalist excesses. Bishops and priests frequently intervened on behalf of individual victims of Nationalist repression. By and large, however, they did not speak out publicly, although Bishop Marcelino Olaheca of Pamplona did issue an impassioned plea for compassion and pardon in November 1936: "Not a drop of blood in vengeance!"

Franco Takes Power in Nationalist Spain

During the first two months of the war, the junta of national defense made little effort to develop a governmental structure or even to impose any uniform plan on the various parts of Spain nominally under its control. Commanders on the different fronts enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and often clashed with each other.

As the Nationalist forces drew closer to Madrid in September 1936, the need for a unified command became more urgent.

Franco was not a member of the junta, but his command of the Army of Africa and his successful bids for aid from Mussolini and Hitler gave him authority among the Nationalists. On September 29, 1936, the members of the junta named him *generalísimo* and chief of state, investing him with "all powers of the new state." He adopted the title *Caudillo*, a classic Spanish term for leader that rapidly took on some of the overtones of the Italian *Duce* adopted by Mussolini and the German *Fuehrer* used by Hitler.

Franco immediately replaced the junta of national defense with a technical junta that included only one of the members of the now dissolved junta of national defense. The new organization was not designed as a long-term solution but rather as an expedient to oversee the war effort. It would, however, serve as the government of the Nationalist zone for almost a year and a half, until Franco finally formed a regular government.

Largo Caballero Replaces Giral

At the beginning of September 1936, the Socialists withdrew their support from Giral, whose government collapsed. His successor as prime minister, Largo Caballero, was the leader of the most revolutionary wing of Spanish socialism, the Unión General de Trabajadores. He formed a government comprised of five Socialists (two revolutionaries and three moderates), four Left-Republicans, two Communists, one Basque Nationalist, and one nominal Socialist, who by this time was actually aligned with the Communists. He invited the Anarchists to join the government, but they preferred to lend their support without entering the cabinet.

Unlike many other revolutionary movements, which grow gradually more radical with the passage of time, the revolution that broke out in Spain was at its most extreme during the first six weeks of the war, a period during which the government was made up entirely of members of middle-class parties of the Left. The Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists who formed part of Caballero's government were theoretically far to the left of the politicians who comprised the Giral government. Under their leadership, however, the government gradually brought under

control the terror and the social and economic revolution that had characterized the early weeks of the civil war.

Caballero was determined to create an effective army. His efforts to transform the militias into a People's Army met with resistance from many of his political allies, especially the Anarchists, who saw an army as the antithesis of everything for which they were fighting. Caballero's reputation as a revolutionary firebrand, however, made it possible for him to use more professional officers, at least in staff positions, and to reorganize the militias into brigades of a People's Army. These measures would have been politically impossible for Giral.

Caballero also succeeded in gradually winning power back from the revolutionary committees that had sprung up in the early months of the war. Little by little, he rebuilt a central Republican government, often by appointing the leaders of the committees to governmental positions. He incorporated them into organizations that differed little in appearance from the revolutionary committees but that were actually less open to influence from below and more easily controlled by the central authorities.

In early November 1936, when the Nationalists had already entered the suburbs of Madrid, the Anarchists sacrificed their principles in a last desperate attempt to prevent a Nationalist victory. Four of them entered the Caballero government, which was expanded from thirteen to eighteen ministers. A few days later, on November 6, 1936, in the face of what seemed the imminent Nationalist capture of Madrid, the government moved to Valencia. The leading civil servants and politicians of all parties, except the Communists, abandoned Madrid, opening the door to Communist dominance after the unexpected success of Republican forces in resisting the Nationalist offensive against the capital.

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The rapid division of the country into two zones, and the breakdown of communications within the Republican zone, separated the members of Opus Dei who were outside Madrid from Escrivá and the rest of the members in Madrid. The outbreak of violent class conflict and religious persecution throughout the Republican

zone interrupted Opus Dei's corporate apostolic activities and obstructed its members' personal apostolate with their friends, colleagues, and relatives. Like many other Spaniards, a number of the members found their lives in danger and were forced to go into hiding.

Close Calls in Revolutionary Madrid

 JULY 1936—MARCH 1937

The Early Weeks of the Civil War

In Madrid, the center of the Nationalist uprising was the Montaña barracks, located directly across the street from Ferraz 16. Most of the members of the Opus Dei then in Madrid were getting the new residence ready. On July 19, 1936, government security forces and militiamen began blocking the streets leading to the barracks. That evening, at Escrivá's urging, del Portillo, Hernández de Garnica, and Jiménez Vargas left the residence and went to their homes. They called the residence to tell Escrivá, Zorzano, and González Barredo that they had arrived safely. The next morning they gathered in Jiménez Vargas's house.

Early on the morning of Monday, July 20, government security forces and militia units, supported by armored cars, cannons, and one or two planes, began an all-out attack on the Montaña barracks. By midday, they had captured the barracks and killed most of its defenders. With mobs forming outside, it was no longer possible to stay in the residence, so Escrivá, Zorzano, and González Barredo fled to the streets. To avoid being recognized as a priest, Escrivá had donned some overalls he found in the residence. Although the crown of his head was shaved, as was the custom for priests at the time, no one noticed, and he made it safely to his mother's home. Zorzano and González Barredo also made it home safely.

On July 25, Jiménez Vargas returned to the residence to pick up some things that had been left behind. A group of Anarchist militiamen stormed into the building minutes later. They questioned him, searched the residence, and then took him to his

parents' home. Despite a thorough search, the militiamen failed to find a file with the names and addresses of all the people involved in DYA's activities. They left without arresting Jiménez Vargas.

Later that day, he met del Portillo in the street to exchange news and decide what to do next. No one knew what the future might hold. If the Nationalist revolt failed, the violently antireligious revolution would make it impossible for Opus Dei to develop in Spain. Should they try to leave Spain in order to carry it on elsewhere? They concluded that God would not have arranged for Opus Dei to begin in Madrid only to uproot it and have it begin somewhere else. Confident that God would protect the Work and its founder from whatever lay ahead, they resolved to remain in Madrid and do everything they could to protect Escrivá.

Through the first week of August, Escrivá remained in hiding in his mother's home, racked with anxiety about the members of the Work in and around Valencia (Vallespín, Casciaro, Botella, and Calvo Serer). He had not heard from them nor had he received any word about them. He was especially concerned about Hernández de Garnica, who had been jailed. The lives of prisoners were in constant jeopardy. Virtually every day, groups were taken out and shot without any kind of trial. In mid-August, a number of moderate political leaders being held in prison, including four former ministers in Republican governments, were assassinated.

Zorzano's situation also became critical. Railroad workers had searched for him in vain in Málaga in order to assassinate him for his religious convictions. They then sent a photograph and information about him to their contacts in Madrid. For two months, he was obliged to remain at home. The apartment would probably not be searched because of a document proclaiming that it was under the protection of the Argentine embassy. Although this meant he was relatively safe at the apartment, going out would have been dangerous. Zorzano did not have an Argentine passport, because he had left Argentina as a child, and Argentina did not issue passports to children born there to Spanish parents until

they completed their military service. He had a document indicating that he had been born in Argentina, but it provided little protection on the streets of revolutionary Madrid without an accompanying passport.

Escrivá spent most of his time in his family's apartment praying for the Church, for Opus Dei and its members, and for his country. When he lacked the hosts and wine necessary to say Mass, he celebrated what he called a "dry Mass," praying all the prayers of the Mass except the Consecration. Even in these difficult circumstances, he remained focused on the growth and development of the Work. The texts he used were frequently those from the Mass for vocations, with the Gospel that narrates the calling of the apostles.

On the Run

One day a mob hanged a man who looked like Escrivá from a lamppost in front of the building. The apartment was clearly not a safe hideout. Many people in the neighborhood knew that he was a priest. It was not easy, however, to find a better place. Even friends were reluctant to take in a priest, since his discovery in their home might mean their own deaths.

On August 8, things came to a head when the caretaker of the building notified the Escrivás that militia units had learned that people were hiding out in various apartments in the building. Wearing civilian clothes and his father's wedding ring, Escrivá slipped down the back stairs and managed to reach a boarding-house where Albareda was staying. The next day he went to the apartment of Manuel Sainz de los Terreros, a young civil engineer with whom he had been in contact through DYA since 1933. The family was out of town for the summer, and Sainz, who was living alone in the apartment with an aged servant, agreed to take in Escrivá. Soon they were joined by Jiménez Vargas and by Sainz's cousin, Juan Manuel.

Shortly after Escrivá's arrival, militia units carried out a search of the apartment immediately above Sainz's. The next few weeks were free of such close calls, though they were filled with news of

the death of friends and acquaintances, including priests and religious who died as martyrs. Occasionally there was good news, such as the letter from Vallespín to Zorzano saying that the members of the Work in Valencia, which had remained in the hands of the Republican government, were all safe.

As August wore on, Nationalist troops fought their way to within a few miles of the capital. On August 27, Nationalist aircraft bombed the city for the first time. This triggered new repression and heightened vigilance. On August 30, a group of militia entered the building where Sainz's apartment was located and began a systematic search, starting in the basement. When they reached the third floor and banged on the door of Sainz's apartment, the seventy-year-old servant held them briefly at the front door by pretending to be even more deaf than she was. Meanwhile, Escrivá, Jiménez Vargas, and Juan Manuel slipped up the back stairs to an attic used as a coal bin. Sainz, who was at work when the search began, came home while it was still in progress and was immediately arrested.

In the suffocating heat of the attic, as the fugitives heard the search drawing closer, Jiménez Vargas asked Escrivá what would happen if they were caught and killed. "We'll go to heaven, my son," Escrivá responded. Comforted by this reply, Jiménez Vargas stretched out on the floor covered with coal dust and went to sleep.

Eventually, the militia reached the section of the attic adjacent to their hiding spot. Escrivá whispered: "I am a priest. We are in danger. If you like, make an act of contrition, and I will give you absolution." Juan Manuel commented later: "It took a lot of courage to tell me that he was a priest. Had they entered there, I might have tried to save my own life by denouncing him." Fortunately, the militia left without searching the part of the attic where they were hiding.

After Sainz's arrest, it was not prudent to return to his apartment. The three sought refuge temporarily in another apartment in the same building, which belonged to Count Leyva. Although the Count had been arrested earlier in the month, his wife and daughters welcomed them.

The Republican government was concerned about Nationalist sympathizers in Madrid. Therefore, it required people to keep windows open and lights on so they could see, from the outside, the occupants of each apartment. The three refugees, therefore, spent two days in the dining room, the only room with no windows. One of the children of the family recalls: "At times we were very frightened, but Don Josemaría kept his faith-filled outlook and his good humor. He made us laugh, although naturally he was very concerned about his family. Despite the circumstance, he never lost his cheerfulness that had both a theological and a human basis. He took an interest in each one of us."

At the beginning of September, Escrivá and Jiménez Vargas left the Leyva apartment in search of a safer refuge. Escrivá's efforts failed, and he was forced to seek asylum, one night at a time, from friends who wanted to help but were afraid of the consequences if he was found in their homes. One day, he came to González Barredo's apartment so exhausted from hunger and lack of rest that he could hardly stay on his feet. The family took him in for the moment, but the caretaker of the building was affiliated with a left-wing party, and they feared he might denounce them.

Del Portillo had remained in his parents' home until August 13. That day, militia searched the neighboring apartment, which belonged to the son of a general. Soon the search extended to the del Portillo apartment. As the militia entered his room, del Portillo began chewing a piece of paper that contained a list of his friends with their addresses and telephones. When a militiaman asked what he was chewing, he calmly answered, "A piece of paper." They did not arrest him, although they did arrest his father. The general's son was executed the same day, following a trial before a popular tribunal. Since his parents' home was obviously no longer safe, del Portillo sought temporary refuge in a house on Serrano Street belonging to some family friends.

On the same day that Escrivá reached González Barredo's home, del Portillo went to the office where he had been working before the outbreak of the war to try to collect his pay. On his way back, he decided to have a beer at a sidewalk café, without thinking that militia patrols frequently searched cafés and restaurants

looking for people who lacked papers from one of the local revolutionary committees attesting to the bearer's support of the Republic. As he was sitting at the café table, González Barredo's father came running up and poured out the news that Escrivá was at his apartment and in danger. Del Portillo took Escrivá with him to the house where he was staying. During the second half of September, they remained there, together with del Portillo's brother and Jiménez Vargas.

During the time they spent in the house on Serrano Street, Escrivá, del Portillo and his brother, and Jiménez Vargas tried to live as normal a life as possible. They were anxious to use their time well, because the sanctification of work and other ordinary activities is the heart of Opus Dei. With no books to study, they set up other activities including lectures on areas of their professional competence. Escrivá frequently preached meditations, and their schedule included fixed times for other acts of piety. This pattern recurred throughout the war. Whenever a group of Opus Dei members were together, they set up a schedule to facilitate making good use of their time.

In the years since 1928, on every October 2, the anniversary of Opus Dei's foundation, Escrivá had grown accustomed to receiving a favor from God—perhaps a vocation or an inspiration of some sort. On October 1, 1936, while he was asking himself what God might give him the next day, they received news that militia units had begun searching other properties belonging to the family in whose house they were hiding and had killed several people they found there. As Escrivá gave a blessing to his companions, he simultaneously felt joy at the thought of martyrdom and a deep fear that made his legs tremble uncontrollably. That fear, he realized, contained a message: "You are a coward, if I leave you alone." This conviction, he concluded, was the gift God had prepared for him on the vigil of the eighth anniversary of Opus Dei's foundation.

Finding another refuge was urgent. Escrivá talked by phone with González Barredo, who said he was sure he could find them a place. Shortly thereafter, Escrivá met with González Barredo, but he turned down the refuge he offered. Escrivá threw the key

down a sewer when he learned that the apartment's only occupant was a young maid. "My son," he said, "don't you realize that I am a priest. With the war and the persecution, everyone's nerves are on edge. I cannot and do not want to remain shut up day and night with a young woman. I have a commitment to God that is more important than anything else. I would prefer to die rather than offend God, rather than fail in that commitment of love."

Escrivá returned briefly to the house on Serrano Street the next day. In the meantime he had learned of the assassination of two close priest friends, Fr. Vea-Murguía, one of the group of priests who had been with him since the early 1930s, and Fr. Pedro Poveda, the founder of the Teresians and a close friend from whom he had sought advice.

Once again, Escrivá, del Portillo, and Jiménez Vargas took to the streets without papers and with no place to go. Police and militia vigilance was intensifying due to fear that supporters of the Nationalist armies, now virtually surrounding the city, might stage an uprising. Many days the members of the Work wandered the streets from dawn to dusk because that was safer than staying in one place. Various friends, including Professor Selles and Dr. Herrero Fontana, took them in for a few days but were unable to offer a permanent refuge.

Professor Selles' recollections of the few days Escrivá and the other members of the Work spent in his home are similar to those of the Leyva family members:

They spent practically the whole day in my study that we converted into a bedroom. They hardly left the room for fear that someone might come to the house and hear them. Despite the circumstances, his conversation at meals was congenial and interesting. I was struck by his confidence in God. He abandoned himself completely in the Lord without tension. It was as if nothing special was happening, although in fact his circumstances were very risky. What I most remember is the rosary. He led it in the evening, kneeling in front of a picture of the Sacred Heart that we had in our bedroom. I don't need

to say anything more to anyone who knows what the rosary meant to the Father and how he spoke with his heart when he prayed it.

In Dr. Suils's Asylum for the Mentally Ill

Dr. Suils, a former classmate of Escrivá's in Logroño, had already given refuge to several people in a private asylum for the mentally ill that he operated in Madrid. Although he had not seen Escrivá since their school days, when he learned about his plight, he offered to take him in. Dr. Herrero Fontana used a car from the hospital where he worked to transfer Escrivá from his home to the asylum. He put Escrivá in the back seat and told the militiaman who was driving that the patient was delusional but not dangerous. During the drive to the asylum, Escrivá talked to himself, asserting from time to time that he was a well-known physician and author, Dr. Marañón. The act convinced the driver, who commented, "If he's that crazy, it's better just to shoot him and not waste time on him."

When Escrivá arrived in the asylum, it seemed probable that the Nationalists would succeed in capturing Madrid within a few weeks. However, their assaults on the city were met and turned back by Socialist and Anarchist militia units and by the recently organized International Brigades. It became clear that Spain faced a protracted civil war and that even if the Nationalists eventually were to win, it would be a long time before they took Madrid.

Escrivá's brother, Santiago, soon joined him in the asylum. González Barredo and Jiménez Vargas, who had been arrested and held briefly in jail, also sought refuge there, but they soon were forced to leave. González Barredo found temporary hiding places in Madrid, and Jiménez Vargas enrolled in an Anarchist brigade. To avoid fighting for a regime that was persecuting the Church, he gave himself injections that provoked fever, but the military authorities ordered him to the front despite the fever.

The asylum was far from being a safe hiding place. One day, militia came and took away one of the patients. Another day, a

group of militia came on a tip that some of the patients were in fact political refugees. As the inmates were being lined up, one of the real patients walked right up to a militiaman and asked whether his gas mask was a wind or a string instrument. The encounter so unnerved the militiamen that they abandoned the search, exclaiming, "Let's get out of here. These people are raving mad." One of the nurses, however, suspected that some patients were not as crazy as they pretended to be; and as the number of refugees increased, the risk of denunciations grew.

After the first few days, Escrivá was able to say Mass daily in his room. A friendly nurse stationed herself on a couch in the hall outside. If it appeared that someone was going to enter the room, she would signal Escrivá, who would shut the doors of the closet where he had arranged the things for Mass. After Mass he gave Holy Communion to some of the refugees, and when he left in March, he gave them small particles of the consecrated Host wrapped individually in cigarette paper. That way, even after his departure, they were able to receive Holy Communion while respecting the liturgical rules of the time that prohibited lay people from touching the Host. One of the refugees commented afterward, "I recall that incident very well, because I was impressed by the profound respect he had for the Blessed Sacrament."

The months in the asylum were marked by intense suffering. There was little food and almost no heat. Escrivá suffered a severe rheumatism attack that kept him in bed for two weeks. Worse than the physical privations were the isolation, the need to feign madness and, above all, the uncertainty surrounding the precarious situations of the other members of the Work.

Del Portillo, Hernández de Garnica, Jiménez Vargas, and Casciaro

After leaving the house on Serrano Street, del Portillo found temporary refuge in the apartments of several friends and eventually gained admittance to the Finnish embassy. Early in December, however, militia units raided the embassy and arrested del Portillo and a number of other refugees. In San Antón prison, a makeshift

jail set up in what had been a school, del Portillo ran into Hernández de Garnica.

Death constantly threatened the prisoners in San Antón. One day, when about four hundred of them were being held in what had been the school chapel, a militiaman got up on the altar and stuck a cigarette in the mouth of a statue. When a friend of del Portillo's removed it, he was shot dead. Another day a guard walked up to del Portillo, put a pistol to his head, and asserted, "You wear glasses. You must be a priest." Then he lowered his pistol and walked away.

Del Portillo was tried as an enemy of the Republic at the end of January 1937. By that time, some judicial procedures had been reestablished, and, in the absence of evidence, he was released. Release, however, did not mean safety. He still could have been picked up by a militia unit and imprisoned again or shot on the spot. Because his mother was Mexican, he was able to find refuge in the Mexican embassy from the end of January 1937 until March 13, 1937.

Hernández de Garnica was not as fortunate as del Portillo. Despite suffering a serious kidney ailment, he continued to be held in prison. During this period, groups of prisoners were frequently taken out for no apparent reason and executed. One day, it seemed that his time had come. He was handcuffed and loaded onto a truck with other prisoners to be shot. The truck was ready to pull out when someone shouted his name and ordered him to get off and return to his cell.

A short time later, in February 1937, he was transferred to a prison in the provinces and from there to the Model Prison in Valencia. When Escrivá learned that he was being held in Valencia, he wrote to Casciaro asking him to do all he could to help Hernández de Garnica. In July 1937, he was released from jail, partially due to his kidney problems, but shortly thereafter, he was drafted into the Republican army, where he served until the end of the war.

Vallespín was in Valencia when the civil war broke out. His situation was very precarious. He had gone there for a few days to sign the contract for the new residence, and he was a stranger in

the city. He had no job, no contacts apart from the few young members of the Work, and no place of his own in which to stay. In August, when it became apparent that the coup had failed and that the country faced a prolonged conflict, he joined a Socialist union. Because he was an architect, he was assigned to help design fortifications on the front in Teruel, a hundred miles east of Madrid.

Casciario was the Opus Dei member who was least affected by the outbreak of the civil war. He had gone to spend the summer with his family in the province of Alicante, on Spain's Mediterranean coast. He was promptly called up for the Republican army but was declared unfit for service because of poor eyesight. He remained at his family's estate. His grandfather, who held a British passport, had posted a sign on the gate declaring that the property belonged to a British subject, and over the house flew a large Union Jack. This connection with Great Britain, in addition to his father's prominent position in local center-left politics, gave Casciario a certain degree of security and some ability to move around.

The rumors that circulated in the provinces about violence in Madrid made Casciario fear for Escrivá and the other members of the Work. He was enormously relieved when, after two months, he received a postcard from Escrivá. In that postcard, and in subsequent brief letters, Escrivá urged him to persevere in prayer and not to lose confidence in God. For fear of censorship, he could not refer directly to God or to any other religious subject. Nonetheless, Casciario understood that when Escrivá urged him to "speak often with Emmanuel and his mother," he meant praying to our Lord and to the Blessed Virgin, and that when he suggested that he let himself "be guided always by Emmanuel," he meant abandonment to God's will.

In the fall of 1936, as it became clear that the war was not likely to end any time soon, Casciario managed to get a job in a nearby laboratory. This enabled him to join the Socialist union and the Socialist party. With those documents, he was able to travel throughout the eastern part of Spain and to visit Calvo Serer, one of the newer members of the Work. Calvo Serer had been forced

to go into hiding, because his position as one of the officers of the Catholic Students Association in Valencia made him a marked man in Republican Spain. He remained in hiding until the summer of 1937, when he emerged and was drafted into the Republican army.

Despite difficulties in receiving the sacraments, Casciaro tried to maintain the life of prayer and sacrifice he had learned in the Work. He was able to attend Mass regularly in a nearby village until the village revolutionary committee prohibited the elderly parish priest from saying Mass. Even after that, he was able to receive Communion and go to confession frequently.

Casciaro understood that even under these extraordinary circumstances, he could not be content with merely cultivating his own relationship with God. He had to bring others closer to God as well. The obvious place for Casciaro to start was with his younger brother, José. Casciaro advised him not to let the days and weeks go by in vain. Concretely he suggested that he study French while he was tending the family's flock of sheep. Additionally, he encouraged his brother to live a regular plan of piety, including time for personal meditation and the rosary.

* * *

The failure of the Nationalists' repeated assaults on Madrid in late 1936 and early 1937 led them to abandon their efforts to capture Madrid as a means of ending the conflict. The war was transformed into one of attrition and occupation that was destined to last until the spring of 1939. The change in the character of the war is clearer in retrospect than it was at the time to the members of the Work, whose information came entirely from heavily censored press reports and unreliable rumors. Nonetheless, by early 1937, even their sketchy and unreliable information suggested that the war would probably not end soon. The time had come to seek safer and more stable refuge and to begin finding ways to carry on Opus Dei's apostolate in a country that might be indefinitely divided by war. In examining their response to these new circumstances, it is helpful first to outline the course of the war from March 1937 to its conclusion on April 1, 1939.

Later Stages of the Civil War

❧ MARCH 1937—APRIL 1939

The War in the North—March to November 1937

Forced to recognize that he could not take Madrid, Franco turned his attention to the Basque country and to the provinces of Santander and Asturias, which lay to its west along Spain's Atlantic coast. The Nationalist northern offensive began on March 31, 1937, but advances in the mountainous Basque country were slow. It was the middle of June before Nationalist troops entered the principal city of Bilbao, an important industrial center. With its fall, resistance in the Basque provinces ended, but Santander and Asturias remained in Republican hands.

Before Franco could turn to Santander, the Republic launched an offensive to the east of Madrid toward the small town of Brunete. It assembled 150 aircraft, 125 tanks, and 140 artillery pieces for the attack. The battle of Brunete raged from July 5, 1937, until July 26, 1937. When it was over, the Republicans had gained only a three-mile advance along a ten-mile wide front at a cost of 25,000 casualties and 100 aircraft destroyed. Losses were particularly heavy in the International Brigades, which the Republic used as shock troops. Nationalist losses were less than half those of the Republic.

With the Madrid front restabilized, Franco resumed the offensive in the north, advancing on Santander on August 14, 1937. In this campaign the Nationalists enjoyed overwhelming superiority in artillery and aircraft, and Republican resistance was light. By the end of August 1937, the Nationalists had taken Santander.

Before Franco could take Asturias, the last Republican province remaining in northern Spain, the Republican army began a

diversionary offensive along the Ebro river in Aragon, both north and south of Zaragoza. The battle, which began on August 24, 1937, continued sporadically until the end of September. Much of the fighting took place around the little town of Belchite, from which the battle took its name. Despite enjoying overwhelming numerical superiority, the Republican diversionary attack failed. The Nationalists were forced to divert only one major unit from the northern front and lost very little ground.

Franco's forces resumed their northern offensive on September 1, 1937. Mountainous terrain favored the defense, but by October 21, 1937, the Nationalists had occupied all of Asturias and the northern front had ceased to exist.

Fusion of the Falange and the Carlists

In the Nationalist zone, all leftist and liberal political parties had been outlawed from the beginning of the war. The two principal political groups were the conservative monarchist Carlists (who were strong in Navarre) and the fascist-inspired Falange. In the environment created by the civil war, the nationalism, authoritarianism, and military tone of the Falange appealed to many middle-class Spaniards. Its national syndicalist social and economic program garnered some working-class support in areas controlled by the Nationalists. The party grew rapidly during the early months of the war, despite its lack of competent leaders.

Civilian politics, however, were overshadowed in the Nationalist zone by military dominance. Franco concentrated on military matters and on foreign relations, paying little attention to domestic politics in the months immediately following his appointment as *generalísimo* and head of state.

As the war dragged on, however, Franco became increasingly aware of the need for political organization to legitimize his rule and to justify the carnage of the war. For this task, he turned to his brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Súñer, a lawyer and former deputy to the Cortes, who was sympathetic to the syndicalist goals of the Falange. In April 1937, Franco announced the fusion of the Carlists and the Falange into a new unified political group called

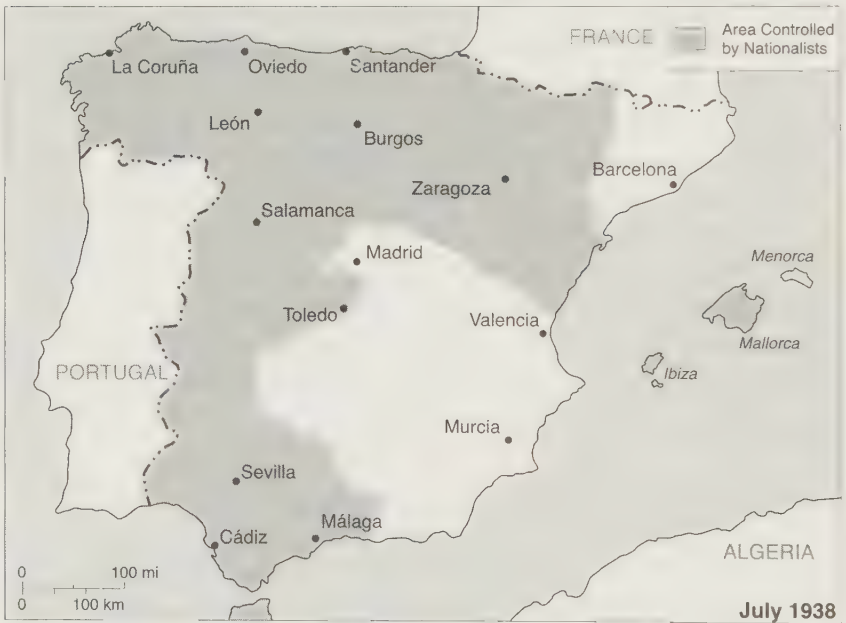
the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS* (FET). The FET, headed by Franco, would be the official state party and the only political organization permitted in Nationalist Spain. A number of Falangist leaders attempted to resist the fusion, but they were quickly quashed. Within a few days, the Nationalist regime adopted a number of Falangist slogans and symbols, including the raised-arm fascist salute.

The decree of unification declared that the new party would provide an organized political basis for the new state "as in other countries of totalitarian regime." When Franco referred to Nationalist Spain as a totalitarian regime, he seems to have had in mind a traditional unitary authoritarian state rather than the rigorous total institutional control found in the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany. The statutes of the FET, which were not published until August 1937, reflected much of the syndicalist policy of the Falange but stressed the role of Franco who, as "supreme *Caudillo* of the Movement, personifies all its values."

Because of its status as official state party, the FET grew rapidly. Anyone who hoped to advance in Franco's Spain, or to conceal a leftist or liberal past, soon joined. But most of the new affiliates paid little attention to the party's official philosophy. When Franco finally named the first national council of the FET in October 1937, no more than twenty of its fifty members could be considered serious Falangists. Thirteen were Carlists, four were non-Carlist monarchists, and seven were military commanders. The national council met infrequently and had no real authority, but its composition reflected Franco's policy of including informal groups that supported his regime, without allowing any one group to develop a dominant position.

Growing Communist Influence in the Republican Zone

The military crisis facing the Republic during the fall of 1936 had brought together Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, and Liberals in the Caballero government. Once the immediate threat passed, the strains in the Republican coalition promptly resurfaced.



Division of Spain during the Civil War.

Before the outbreak of the civil war, the Communist party had been a small splinter group with little influence on the Spanish Left. As the war progressed, however, it grew in size and influence because the Soviet Union was the chief source of arms for the Republic, and the Communist units were the best disciplined and most effective parts of the Republican army.

Moscow dictated the policies of the Communist party in Spain. Stalin was mortally afraid of Nazi Germany's threat to Russia and desperately wanted to win the support of France and Great Britain. Communist propagandists both in Spain and in the rest of Europe, therefore, were instructed to present the Spanish Civil War as the defense of a liberal democratic regime against the onslaught of fascism. The Spanish Communists argued that the time had not come for proletarian revolution in Spain. Rather, the working class should temporarily abandon all dreams of revolution and join forces with liberals and democrats in defense of Republican legality. Similarly, popular militia units would have to give way to disciplined army units, although this did not mean the army would become apolitical, since political commissars would continue to play an important role in it.

The growing influence of the Communist party and its stress on waging war rather than revolution aroused great hostility and opposition from other leftist groups, especially the Anarchists and the Trotskyite Unified Spanish Workers Party (POUM). This hostility came to a head in Barcelona, where both the Anarchists and the POUM were strong. On May 2, 1937, fighting broke out in Barcelona as government and Communist forces battled Anarchists and the POUM for control of the city. For several days, a civil war within the civil war raged in Barcelona. The government sent two cruisers and a battleship, both with contingents of troops, to Barcelona. Four thousand assault guards arrived overland from Valencia. Aided by these large infusions of armed forces from outside the city, the Republic regained control of Barcelona by May 8, 1937, but not before approximately four hundred people had died and one thousand had been wounded.

The fighting in Barcelona weakened the extreme Left and undermined Catalan autonomy, strengthening the hand of the

central government and of the Communist party. Central control of Barcelona and Catalonia was further enhanced at the end of October 1937, with the transfer of the Republican government from Valencia to Barcelona.

The Negrín Government

The Communist party was becoming increasingly hostile to Largo Caballero's leadership. It took advantage of the May events in Barcelona and its control of Soviet military aid from the Soviet Union to press for further centralization, police terror, reduction of Anarchist influence in the cabinet, and increased Russian influence in military decisions. When Caballero refused to go along with their demands, the Communist party engineered his fall and replaced him with a new prime minister, Juan Negrín. Negrín, who took office in May 1937, was a Socialist who had served as a deputy to the Cortes since 1931 and had been named finance minister by Caballero in September of 1936. He had proven to be a successful administrator, with no particular political following or power base, which made him acceptable to the disparate political groups that comprised the Republic.

As prime minister, Negrín was an opportunistic realist, willing to make any political sacrifice to win the war. His cabinet included Prieto as minister of war and one other Socialist from Prieto's wing of the party, but no supporters of Largo Caballero. The Communists continued to hold two seats in the cabinet, which also included two Republicans, a Basque Nationalist and a Catalan. Negrín asked the Anarchists to join his government, but they refused.

The fact that Prieto, who was becoming increasingly anticommunist, held the vital position of minister of war suggests that, in the short run, the Communists gained little from the change of government. Over time, however, the political moderation of the Communist party, its realism in the face of the war, and the Republic's dependence on the USSR for arms all combined to make Negrín turn increasingly to the Communists for support. His economic program restricted the growth and activities of

agrarian collectives, reduced worker control in industry, and extended central government control over the more important aspects of the economy.

In March 1938, the Communist party began an all-out attack on Prieto, whom it criticized for defeatism. As the Nationalist armies pushed their way into Aragon and toward the Catalan capital, Prieto grew more and more discouraged, and on April 5, 1938, the day on which Nationalist troops came within sight of the Mediterranean, he fell from the government. Negrín took over the post of minister of defense. This would be the last major change in the composition of the Republican government until the end of the war.

The War Grinds On

After a lull of several months during which both sides rebuilt and repositioned their forces, on December 15, 1937, the Republic launched a new offensive at Teruel, a provincial capital with about twenty thousand inhabitants, located 80 miles northwest of Valencia and 140 miles east of Madrid. By the end of the first day's fighting, the Republicans had surrounded Teruel, and by Christmas day they had captured part of the town. On December 29, the Nationalists began a counteroffensive, which soon petered out in below-zero temperatures and a blizzard that deposited four feet of snow on the roads. On January 8, 1938, the last of the Nationalist defenders within the city surrendered.

The capture of Teruel would have little long-term military effect, but it was a significant propaganda victory for the Republic. Teruel was the first and only important town captured by the Republic during the war—a welcome victory following a long series of defeats. Franco was unwilling to leave the Republicans in control of Teruel, and the Republican troops within the city walls soon became the besieged. Fighting in the area of Teruel continued until late February, when the Republicans were finally forced to withdraw.

Teruel thus eventually became another defeat for the Republic—10,000 Republican soldiers were killed, and 14,000 were

taken prisoner. It showed once again that although the Republican army could catch the Nationalists off guard and even hold its own for a time in heavy fighting, in sustained combat it would eventually succumb.

On March 9, 1938, the Nationalists opened a new offensive in Aragon, along a broad front that stretched for about sixty miles. Despite increased assistance from France and the Soviet Union, the Republican army was unable to resist the advance of the Nationalists, who enjoyed superiority in artillery and air power as a result of aid from Germany and Italy. On April 15, 1938, Nationalist units reached the Mediterranean, slicing the Republican zone in two and separating Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia from Valencia. Within a few days, the wedge the Nationalists had driven between the Republican armies had grown to fifty miles wide. For a moment, it seemed that the Republic was on the verge of collapse and that the war would soon be over.

Rather than turning north to capture Barcelona and seal off the French border, Franco decided to turn south toward Valencia. His advance along the narrow coastal road and through the rugged hills to the west proved slow. At the end of July 1938, before he could reach Valencia, the Republicans launched an offensive across the bend of the Ebro river north of Tortosa, in southern Catalonia. With major infusions of arms from France and the Soviet Union, the Republic had been remarkably successful in reorganizing its forces. The Republican army of the Ebro soon occupied a bulge fifteen miles long and ten miles deep. Once again, however, it proved unable to exploit its initial advantage, and the Nationalists soon stabilized the front.

At this juncture, many Republicans began to turn their thoughts to a negotiated peace, but Franco would accept nothing short of an unconditional surrender. Faced with this prospect, Negrín and his Communist supporters believed they had to continue fighting in the hope that a European crisis might lead to a cessation of German and Italian aid to the Nationalists and perhaps to active support of the Republic by France and Great Britain.

From a strategic point of view, Franco should probably have launched a counteroffensive in northern Catalonia after stabilizing

the Ebro front. But, as usual, he was reluctant for political reasons to leave the Republic in control of any ground he had once occupied. He concentrated his forces, therefore, for a counteroffensive along the Ebro river, which began on September 3, 1938. Nationalist progress was slow. It was not until November 16, 1938, that the Nationalists recaptured all the ground west of the Ebro that they had lost during the summer. The battle of the Ebro cost the Republic some 70,000 casualties, including approximately 30,000 dead, 20,000 wounded, and 20,000 taken prisoner. Nationalist casualties exceeded 30,000.

After a month's respite, Franco resumed the offensive in Catalonia. Republican defenses, severely depleted by the Ebro campaign, crumpled in the face of the new attack. On January 26, 1939, Nationalist troops captured Barcelona, and the remaining units of the Republican army in Catalonia collapsed. Between February 5 and February 10, 1939, approximately 250,000 Republican soldiers fled across the border into France, as did Negrín and most of the members of his government. By February 10, 1939, the Nationalists occupied all of Catalonia.

Franco Forms a Regular Government

Franco would probably have preferred to wait until the end of the war to form a regular government and appoint a council of ministers, but as the war dragged on with no end in sight, the pressure to regularize the government increased. On January 30, 1938, he announced a new law setting up a regular governmental structure. The new law officially sanctioned Franco's dictatorial powers: "The chief of state possesses the supreme power to dictate legal norms of general character."

On January 31, 1938, Franco appointed his first ministers. The cabinet, which replaced the *Junta técnica*, represented a balance of the principal political forces within Nationalist Spain. The vice-president of the cabinet and foreign minister was General Gómez Jordana, a moderate monarchist and Anglophile, whose appointment angered many Falangists. Two other positions were awarded to senior generals who had collaborated with Primo de Rivera.

Two seats in the cabinet went to monarchists; one to a Carlist; two to technicians with no particular political connections; and three to Falangists, only one of whom had belonged to the party prior to the war. The only areas in which the FET had real power were propaganda and censorship.

From the beginning of the war, military leaders had promised populist and nationalist reforms designed to regulate large industries and to improve the lot of the lower classes, especially in agriculture. The cabinet named in 1938 announced that it would soon publish a labor charter. After considerable infighting between Falangists and more conservative supporters of the Franco regime, the *Fuero del Trabajo* was published on March 9, 1938.

The document was merely a declaration of principles to be implemented later by legislation. It proclaimed a middle ground between liberal capitalism and Marxist socialism in which private property would be respected but workers' rights were protected. The *Fuero del Trabajo* recognized, on paper, an impressive range of workers' rights, including a minimum wage, health and unemployment insurance, and limited hours, but workers were not to be permitted to form independent labor unions. Instead, capital and labor within each sector of the economy would be organized into vertical syndicates under the direction of the state. Strikes and lockouts were described as crimes against the nation, and special labor courts were contemplated for resolving labor disputes. During the final year of the war, some attempts were made to create a syndicalist organization at both the national and provincial level, but little materialized.

The End of the War

After the collapse of Catalonia, Negrín and other members of his cabinet returned by air to Spain to negotiate peace terms, but Franco reiterated that he would accept only an unconditional surrender. The capitulation of France and Great Britain to Germany at Munich in the fall of 1938 had seriously undermined the Republic's hopes for a favorable change in the international climate. Nonetheless, responding to the influence of his Commu-

nist supporters, Negrín preferred continued resistance to unconditional surrender.

A group of officers in Madrid, led by Colonel Casado, revolted against Negrín's government, precipitating armed conflict in the city between Communist-dominated units of the army and those that supported Casado. By mid-March, Casado was firmly in control in Madrid. On March 19, 1939, he opened formal negotiations with Franco, which soon broke down because of Franco's refusal to accept any meaningful conditions. The remaining units of the Republican army began to dissolve, and Nationalist troops entered Madrid unopposed. On April 1, 1939, Franco officially announced the end of the war.

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For Opus Dei, the two years between March 1937 and April 1939 were a period dominated by hidden sacrifice and prayer. There were moments of high drama and great danger. The significance of those years, however, lay not in the dramatic events but in the daily effort of the members of the Work to sanctify themselves and carry out the apostolate of Opus Dei under extremely unfavorable circumstances. At the end of two years, despite few external accomplishments, Opus Dei would emerge from the war strengthened by its members' heroic efforts in the midst of privations.

Seeking Refuge in Madrid

 MARCH 1937—OCTOBER 1937

The Legation of Honduras

González Barredo found refuge in January 1937 in the legation of Honduras through a friend of the consul's son-in-law. The legation occupied two floors of a Madrid apartment building that had been the residence of the acting consul general of Honduras, a diplomat from San Salvador. It enjoyed limited diplomatic immunity. A mere legation headed by a consul of a small country would get much less respect than a full-fledged embassy and even embassies had been invaded in December 1936. In any case, it offered more security than the asylum.

González Barredo's efforts to obtain permission for other members of the Work to join him proved fruitless at first. The consul was well disposed, but the place was already overflowing with refugees. Finally, on March 13, del Portillo was able to get into the legation. The next day, Zorzano went with a car of the legation to pick up Escrivá and his brother, Santiago. On the way back, three separate patrols stopped them, but each time they were allowed to continue. A few days later, they were joined by Eduardo Alastrue.

Vallespín, serving in the Republican army, took advantage of a brief leave in March 1937 to make his way to Madrid. Bearded and dressed in a militia uniform, he knocked at the door of Zorzano's apartment. Zorzano immediately took him to visit Escrivá and the others at the legation. Vallespín considered the possibility of remaining in the legation in the hope of evacuation through diplomatic channels, but he eventually decided to return to his unit and look for an opportunity to cross the front. Two months later, in May 1937, he managed to slip across the front to the Nationalist side.

Jiménez Vargas joined the group in the legation on April 7, 1937. Moved by the conviction that Escrivá and the others needed him in Madrid, he had deserted the Anarchist militia unit in which he had been serving and had returned to the capital. Despite the danger of harboring a deserter, even briefly, Zorzano took him in immediately and hurried to Vargas's house to find his civilian clothes. As soon as he had arranged for Vargas to find refuge with the other members of the Work in the legation of Honduras, Zorzano returned home and burnt Vargas's uniform.

Although it was far from entirely safe, the legation had a number of advantages. It was less risky than the asylum, and a number of members of the Work could be together there. Most important, it seemed that the consul might be able to arrange for all the refugees in the legation to be evacuated from Spain through diplomatic channels.

The legation was packed with almost a hundred refugees: mostly men, a few women, and even a child. Doctors, lawyers, and engineers constituted the majority, but there were also priests, professors, army officers, and an artist. The apartments that comprised the legation were totally inadequate for so many people. On Escrivá's floor there was a single toilet for thirty people. Food was barely sufficient to keep people alive and consisted primarily of a type of beans used in peacetime to feed animals. Often the beans were infested with bugs.

Most of the refugees did nothing but wait for the war to end, worry about the possibility that any moment the militia might invade and carry them away, and ruminate over what they had lost. One of the members of the Work describes their daily life:

After a long night spent on a cot, the refugees had to await their turn for the bathroom, whose use was tightly regulated. I don't recall any breakfast at all. The morning stretched ahead endlessly and was spent talking, daydreaming, or sleeping again. Very few read or studied. Then, after a wretched meal served at midday on a dilapidated table, came a seemingly interminable afternoon as tedious as the morning. Supper was served quite late and was just as thin as the midday dinner.

Afterward, the refugees retired to await another day as depressing and empty as the previous one.

Nerves were on edge, and arguments broke out frequently. Alastrue recalls:

Some spent the time silently bemoaning their misfortune. Others poured out their troubles, bitterly lamenting family setbacks, career or business losses, and the uncertain future. Ever-present was the fear awakened by past sufferings and persecutions, a fear that painted the world outside our asylum as uninhabitable. In some cases, fear spilled over into hatred for the enemy, a hatred powerless for the moment but buoyed by the prospect of future revenge.

At first, the members of the Work were scattered around the apartment, but soon the consul gave them a room for themselves. It measured about a hundred square feet, little bigger than a small bedroom for one person in a modest home. Its only window looked out on an air shaft and provided little ventilation. The room was so dark that most of the day they had to keep lit the bare bulb that hung from the ceiling. The furniture consisted of five long, thin cushions that they folded and stacked next to the walls during the day in place of chairs. At night, they rolled out four of the cushions, totally covering the floor where the six of them slept.

Because of the other refugees' fears, most of the priests hiding in the legation said Mass only rarely, but Escrivá was undeterred. At first he celebrated Mass in the vestibule and reserved the Blessed Sacrament in a silver box that he placed inside a decorative metal chest he kept in a locked compartment in a sideboard in the vestibule. Soon, however, other refugees protested that his saying Mass in the vestibule was dangerous; and in May, the consul asked him to stop using the vestibule. From then on he said Mass every day in their small room. The altar was some suitcases piled on top of empty crates, and the chalice a crystal glass. After Mass they kept the Blessed Sacrament in a wallet that they took turns carrying.

Growing on the Inside

Escrivá viewed the stay of the members of the Work in the legation not as a meaningless interlude, but as an opportunity to develop an interior life of prayer and sacrifice. Drawing an analogy with winter wheat, which is planted and sprouts in fall and then lies dormant under winter's snow, he wrote later in *The Way*:

The plants lay hidden under the snow. And the farmer, the owner of the land, remarked with satisfaction: "Now they are growing on the inside." I thought of you, of your forced inactivity. . . . Tell me, are you too growing "on the inside"?

To facilitate that growth, he established a schedule including Mass, mental prayer, spiritual reading, and rosary, as well as time for study, informal get-togethers with the members of the Work, and socializing with other refugees. Looking forward to the future expansion of the Work, he encouraged them to study foreign languages. Del Portillo, for example, began studying Japanese. A priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart who had also found asylum in the legation observed: "While the rest of us spent many hours playing cards, I never saw the Father's companions doing so. One felt that the Father's sights were set on the future, while living today to the full."

Thanks to their lives of prayer and to having the days full, the members of the Work managed to maintain peace, serenity, and good humor. The consul's daughter recalls that "they always helped one another and showed great sensitivity and refinement. For example, they were soon given an affectionate nickname, 'the Whisperers,' because of their refined, quiet conversation."

Escrivá made a point of avoiding all manifestations of political partisanship. He refrained from criticizing the Republican authorities and from joining the celebrations of the other refugees when they received news of Nationalist victories. The consul's son-in-law recalls: "He was gifted with incredible equanimity and enormous serenity. He was exquisitely polite and courteous. He didn't give any indication of restlessness or depression, nor did he

make negative comments about either the Communists or the Nationalists, not even about the bombings and the hardships. And this attitude, far from seeming stilted, struck us as quite normal and natural. Without fuss, he spread serenity and joy, transmitting his peaceful confidence to those around him.”

Practically every day Escrivá preached a meditation to his companions. Alastrue describes the scene:

Seated on the cushions, in semi-darkness, . . . we listened almost daily to the Father's talks and meditations. His words, now serene, now energetic and charged with emotion, but always bearing light, poured over us and seemed to nestle within our souls. They all centered in one way or another on Christ: his person, life, words, and passion. Here he found inexhaustible material: contemplating Christ slowly and lovingly, savoring his words, following step by step his miracles, his teaching, his suffering.

Under these circumstances, even most people who had previously had a vigorous life of piety would probably have contented themselves with waiting out the storm while preserving some minimum level of prayer. In meditations and in his conversations with the members of Opus Dei, however, Escrivá set high goals of growth in interior life:

“The life of man on earth is warfare” (Job 7: 1). But I insist that this struggle should be continuous. If the enemy does not present battle, let us present it. If we cannot tell what we have to combat in ourselves, let us examine our consciences more slowly and carefully. Let us be deeply recollected. Let us go out to meet the enemy alert and ready to provoke him and fight with him as soon as we encounter him. Let us not accept inactivity. As long as we live, the enemy of our soul is lying in wait for us.

Besides, we are full of defects that have to be uprooted, and we lack virtues we need to acquire. Let us try to see where we need to do violence to ourselves, what needs to be suppressed

and what needs to take root. Our life should be a constant effort to carry out the will of God, to give him joy and glory with a perfection sought at the price of mortification and effort. Let us struggle, let us always struggle, humbly, with perseverance and courage. Let us struggle, knowing that we are God's children, because we become especially aware of this when we come to the Work. Let us struggle keeping alive within us *gaudium cum pace* [joy with peace], without becoming upset, without being discouraged by our failures and setbacks. . . .

But our efforts will be worth nothing if we do not count on God. The most important thing, almost the only thing, is his help. Let us ask him for *gaudium cum pace* in all our struggles. Let us ask him to grant us grace, strength, patience, and humility so that, knowing ourselves, we may rely only on him.

Escrivá urged the members of the Work not only to bear cheerfully the hunger, cold, isolation, and anxiety their situation entailed but to seek out opportunities to offer voluntary sacrifices throughout the day. In this, he led the way to a degree that is hard to understand. Rations in the consulate were so short that all the refugees were starving. Escrivá had lost so much weight that when his mother came to visit she did not recognize him until she heard his voice. Nonetheless, he repeatedly tried to take less than his share so that the others would have a little more and in order to have something more to offer to God with a spirit of reparation and penance. He also practiced other vigorous corporal mortifications, including use of the disciplines, moved by a desire to offer reparation to God for the many sacrileges and crimes the war brought with it.

Their intense prayer and spirit of sacrifice brought the members of the Work joy despite the harshness of their situation. Alastrue, looking back on the months spent in the legation, writes:

It was as if our complete indigence, the bleak hardships of seclusion, the danger hovering over us, all engendered a hidden delight. We experienced a true blessing day by day. Not

only did God give us the strength to endure the trial, but truly “the yoke was sweet and the burden light.” We traveled the path of God’s will with hearts brimming with joy. I recall José María González Barredo’s simple and sincere comment one day: “This can’t go on. It’s too much happiness.”

Zorzano

When Zorzano emerged from his family’s apartment in early fall 1936, after two months of hiding out there, he began to function as the principal link among the members of Opus Dei in Madrid. Loss of weight, a new haircut, and dark glasses provided some assurance that he would not be recognized by anyone who was looking for him but offered no protection against being stopped on the street by militia patrols and arrested for lack of documents attesting to his status as a loyal supporter of the Republic. To lessen that danger, he had only an armband with the flag of Argentina and a document from the embassy testifying to his birth in Argentina. With these inadequate protections, his activities required considerable trust in God and his guardian angel and a great deal of raw courage at a time when even people with foreign passports were far from secure in Madrid under siege.

Zorzano went regularly to the prisons to visit the members of the Work despite the real danger of being identified as an enemy of the people. While Hernández de Garnica was held in San Antón prison, Zorzano visited him almost every day, even when air raids forced most people off the streets. Hernández de Garnica recalls, “His charity toward me was exceptional. He came to see me during periods in which no man went to visit those in jail because of the danger it involved.”

The prisons were not the only dangerous places Zorzano frequented. Because of the large numbers of people who had found political asylum in embassies, militia units took careful note of the name of anyone entering one. Zorzano, nonetheless, regularly visited the Norwegian embassy because Rodríguez Casado, who had joined Opus Dei only three months before the outbreak of the war, had found refuge there.

For a time, Rodríguez Casado was in charge of the delivery door of the embassy. That made it possible for Zorzano to go and spend an hour with him in the garage almost every day, praying and talking quietly. Eventually, however, the embassy prohibited these visits, but on Saturdays, when surveillance was less strict, Zorzano was sometimes able to slip in past the embassy guards without being seen. Rodríguez Casado was concerned about the risks Zorzano was taking to visit him and urged him not to come so frequently. Zorzano was aware of the danger of being arrested as a sympathizer of the enemies of the Republic, but he was determined to transmit to Rodríguez Casado the warmth of the family of Opus Dei. He did not deny that the risks were real, but he told him with a smile that if they prayed, placed their trust in God, and took whatever precautions they could, God would protect them.

Zorzano's visits helped Rodríguez Casado keep up his spirits despite the isolation in which he found himself:

I was hungry for news of the Father and the others and to talk about the Work. He radiated enormous confidence in God and talked with great naturalness and simplicity about what our Lord was going to do through the Work within a short time if we were faithful. My faith grew to gigantic proportions in contact with his. I had not lost it. Thanks to God, I had complete security. But seeing him and hearing him, my faith, which was abstract, became concrete. What was only an ideal became reality.

Del Portillo, whom Zorzano visited in the Mexican embassy, responded in much the same way:

We spent a long time talking about what so deeply interested us: the situation of the Father and of all the others. . . . I recall how much good he did me with his outlook, that was so supernatural, in the midst of so much tragedy. He helped me with his great confidence in God, and with the naturalness and simplicity with which he expressed himself, his hope, his

certainty, that God would soon bring about through the Work great fruits of salvation of souls and peace if we were faithful.

During the months in which Escrivá and the other members of the Work were shut up in the legation of Honduras, Zorzano was their contact with the outside world. He visited them practically every day, taking advantage of moments when the militiamen stationed outside were distracted to slip into the building. Even inside things did not always go smoothly. Some refugees were concerned that Zorzano's frequent appearances might attract attention to them, and officials of the legation, including the consul, did everything they could to discourage his visits. Zorzano ignored their often rude protests so as to bring the members of the Work whatever he could find in the way of food, items like razor blades and shoe laces and, most important, news of the other members of the Work in Madrid and elsewhere.

He took with him from the legation detailed summaries of Escrivá's meditations prepared by Alastrue. He used them when he made his own mental prayer and shared them regularly with other members of the Work in Madrid and with José María Albareda and Justo Martí, two of the people who had been receiving formation in DYA before the war. When increased vigilance at the Norwegian embassy made it dangerous to bring copies to Rodríguez Casado there, Zorzano decided to memorize the texts, although they averaged over a thousand words each, so that he could continue to share them with Casado. Occasionally he included some of the ideas from the meditations in letters to the members of the Work in Valencia, using veiled language to avoid problems with government censors.

Throughout the war, Zorzano spent most of his time searching for food for members of the Work in hiding, for their families, and for his own family. Food was so strictly rationed that milk, fresh vegetables, and meat were considered medications, available only with a prescription from a doctor. The food available to those with ration cards was insufficient, and few of the members of the Work even had ration cards.

Zorzano developed an entire network of places where he could

supplement the meager supplies he could get through normal channels. One day he would succeed in getting something at the store established by the embassy of Argentina for its citizens. The next he managed, through the good offices of a friend, to purchase products at the store run by the San Antón prison for the guards and their families. Occasionally the members of the Work in Valencia, where food was not so short, were able to send a package. At other times, a family in the province of Ciudad Real sent beans, rice, potatoes, and even ham.

Early in the spring of 1937, it seemed that Zorzano's efforts on behalf of the members of the Work might come to an end. He was offered an opportunity to be evacuated from Madrid via diplomatic channels. Escrivá, who assumed that Zorzano had full-fledged Argentine citizenship and a passport and was relatively safe, pointed out how useful he was in Madrid but told him to do whatever he thought was best. Without bothering to clarify that he did not have an Argentine passport, Zorzano opted without hesitation to remain in Madrid. Escrivá applauded his generous decision as "undoubtedly the one our Lord wants."

Escrivá and Jiménez Vargas Leave the Legation

When Escrivá and the other members of the Work first took refuge in the legation, it seemed that soon the consul might be able to evacuate all the refugees in the legation. Time after time, however, those hopes were dashed. At the beginning of June, for instance, the consul traveled to Valencia, where the Republican government had established its offices when it seemed that Madrid might be taken by the Nationalists. Zorzano wrote in his diary, "Perhaps they will leave next week. This time, I believe, is the definitive one." But soon the consul returned from Valencia with empty hands, as had happened several times before.

Meantime, Zorzano made efforts to arrange something through other diplomatic missions. Despite the personal risk involved in being in contact with embassies, he sounded out the embassies of Czechoslovakia, Chile, Panama, and even Turkey, but all without results.

By mid-summer 1937, the prospects for an early end to the conflict seemed increasingly remote. Escrivá was anxious to leave the legation and find a situation that would offer him more scope for exercising his priestly ministry and for developing Opus Dei. The members of the Work urged him to leave Madrid and the Republican-controlled zone, where all religion was prohibited, and to cross over to the territory controlled by the Nationalists. Escrivá saw the reasons for trying to make his way to the Nationalist zone but was reluctant to leave his family and members of the Work behind in Madrid while he made his way to safety. In any case, at the moment, there seemed to be no real possibilities of crossing over to the Nationalist-controlled part of Spain, even if he wanted to.

On the other hand, the news that reached him suggested it might be possible to carry out his priestly ministry and the apostolate of Opus Dei in Madrid on a restricted basis, even if not without danger. The worst of the religious persecution in the Republican zone seemed to be over. All churches remained closed and celebration of Mass and other religious activities were still prohibited, but the Republican government had at least partially reined in the uncontrolled elements that had been responsible for most of the killings of priests in the early months of the war. He would not be able to engage in any public priestly activities, but with sufficient precautions it might be possible to minister secretly to some of the many Catholics of Madrid who had been deprived of the sacraments for a year.

During early summer 1937, Escrivá made occasional sorties to the streets dressed in grey overalls to have photographs taken for the counterfeit identification documents he would need if he left the legation, to investigate leads on ways of escaping from the Republican zone, and to exercise on a limited scale his priestly ministry. In the meantime, Zorzano arranged for Escrivá's younger brother, Santiago, to rejoin his mother.

Toward the end of August, Escrivá obtained from the Honduran consul documents that described him as an employee of the legation. The consul also gave him a small Honduran flag to pin on the lapel of his suit coat. Armed with these documents, which

he described as "falsar than Judas," he left the consulate on August 31, 1937, and moved into a boardinghouse. A few days later, acting on the advice of the Honduran consul, he obtained similar documents for Jiménez Vargas from the Panamanian consulate. On September 4, 1937, Jiménez Vargas joined him in the boardinghouse. Had they been arrested and interrogated, the documents would have been of little value, but they provided some protection in the case of a random stop and search on the streets.

Del Portillo, Alastrue, and González Barredo stayed on in the legation because, even with similar documents, it would have been very dangerous for them in Madrid. González Barredo was well known as a Catholic professor, and del Portillo and Alastrue were both wanted for failing to report when called up for military service.

Escrivá and Jiménez Vargas occasionally had dinner with Zorzano, followed by a long get-together. At times they were joined by others. Calvo Serer, for example, who had joined the Republican army during summer 1937 and had been assigned to the International Brigades, came to Madrid for a couple of days at the end of August and beginning of September. Hernández de Garnica, who had been released from prison in Valencia, also spent some time in Madrid before reporting for duty with the Republican army. Zorzano describes their conversation at one such get-together. "We began to dream about what things would be like in a few years time. We ran down the list of the world's principal universities and let our imaginations fly a little." They even laughed at how thin they had become. Isidoro was down to about 105 pounds and Escrivá and Jiménez Vargas were both about 125.

Escrivá moved about Madrid, usually wearing a suit and tie with the Honduran flag pinned conspicuously on his lapel. Often he heard confessions on the street, walking down the sidewalk arm in arm with the penitent. He said Mass in homes and preached meditations to small groups that gathered in the apartments of friends. He carried the Blessed Sacrament with him inside a cigarette case that he kept inside his coat pocket in a small bag with the flag and seal of the Honduran consulate. That made it possible for him to give Holy Communion to more people.

Although the worst of the persecution was over, administering the sacraments and carrying out priestly ministry in Madrid at that time continued to be dangerous. One day, as Escrivá approached an apartment building where he planned to say Mass, a woman greeted him loudly, "How good to see you!" as she grabbed him by the arm and drew him away from the entrance. "Are you going to say Mass there?" she asked him quietly. "Yes," he responded. "Well they are searching the building right now," she said. "If you had gone in, they would have killed you."

Escrivá took whatever precautions he could to avoid being caught. One day, for instance, a friend asked him to baptize his newborn daughter. They set the time for 7 P.M. in the clinic where mother and child were still resting. Without thinking of the risk involved in getting together a group of people, the baby's father invited the godparents and several friends to attend the Baptism. But Escrivá arrived at 5 P.M., baptized the child and left before anyone else arrived.

In addition, Escrivá provided spiritual assistance to members of religious orders who were hiding out in Madrid. Sr. Ascension Quiroga and other nuns were living in secular dress in a boarding-house. To hide the fact that they were nuns, they had begun to use makeup. As time went by, according to Sr. Ascension, they fell into a "spiritual state of fear and laxity." She recalls a talk that Escrivá gave them:

I was struck by how Fr. Josemaría used the first person plural, accusing first himself. He said: "We are cowards. We are afraid to stand up for God." The way he spoke impressed me. He wasn't preaching; we were listening to a saint voicing his personal prayer. I think all of us left that meditation confirmed in our vocation, with a hunger to give ourselves. At least I did.

What he said impressed us so much that we renewed our desires to give ourselves totally to Jesus Christ, as on the day of our religious profession.

Toward the end of September 1937, Escrivá even preached a retreat in Madrid to a small group. Among those attending the

retreat, in addition to Zorzano, was José María Albareda, a teacher at a high school in Madrid whom Zorzano had been seeing regularly and who had joined Opus Dei shortly before the retreat began, and Tomás Alvira, who had met Escrivá at Albareda's apartment during one of his brief forays into the city from the legation in July 1937. Alvira describes the retreat:

Any lengthy gathering might arouse suspicion. In Madrid, each apartment building was under the vigilance of a "control" person. We would each go separately to the apartment where we were meeting. The Father would arrive and give a meditation. Then we'd all leave one by one. Walking along the street, we continued to pray, say the rosary, etc. Afterward we would go to another apartment and have the next meditation. The retreat, which lasted three days, obviously entailed great risk. On the last day, the Father celebrated Holy Mass at my house on a table, without vestments, and using a glass as a chalice.

* * *

The easing of religious persecution in the Republican zone represented an improvement over the desperate conditions of a year earlier, but it was still impossible to conduct any public religious ceremonies, and even personal apostolate still carried with it great risks. In the Nationalist zone, it would be much easier to carry on Opus Dei's apostolate. Crossing from one zone to the other was a dangerous undertaking, but Escrivá and the other members of the Work were willing to run the risk if they could find a method that offered reasonable hope of success.

Albareda learned that his brother and sister-in-law had managed to get from Barcelona across the Pyrenees mountains into France aided by smugglers who in peacetime earned their living bringing contraband goods across the frontier and who now specialized in guiding refugees through the mountains. Once in France, the refugees had no difficulty in entering the Nationalist zone at the town of Irún, at the westernmost extreme of Spain's

border with France. Albareda passed on the information to Zorzano. Despite the repeated failure of his efforts to find a way to get Escrivá and some of the other members of the Work out of Madrid, Zorzano was enthusiastic about this new possibility. It opened a new chapter in Opus Dei's history, one marked by perils and privations.

Escape through the Pyrenees

❧ OCTOBER 1937—DECEMBER 1937

Even with a guide, crossing the Pyrenees would be a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Fr. Ventosa García, a refugee in the legation of Honduras to whom Escrivá had gone to confession every week during his stay there, tried to dissuade him from attempting the crossing, but Escrivá could see no other way of openly carrying out his priestly ministry and working to build Opus Dei. Urged by Zorzano and the other members of Opus Dei, he decided to try, even though that meant leaving behind his mother, sister and brother, and some members of the Work.

From Madrid to Valencia and Barcelona

After much discussion and effort to raise the money necessary to pay their expenses, the members of the Work finally developed a workable plan. Escrivá, Albareda, and Jiménez Vargas, together with Sainz—in whose apartment Escrivá had stayed during the early days of the war—and Alvira—who had only recently come into contact with Opus Dei—would try to make their way to Valencia, where they hoped to meet up with Casciaro and Botella. From there, they would go to Barcelona, where they would try to find smugglers who could guide them across the mountains into southern France.

By October, they had put together some money from gifts and loans from friends and relatives and the remainder of the funds they had gathered earlier for the new residence. Even looking at things optimistically, the amount was barely sufficient to reach Barcelona and to pay guides to lead them through the mountains. Nonetheless, having done all they could to raise money, they put

their trust in Providence that somehow they would be able to pay for the trip.

In addition to the money, they also needed to obtain personal identity documents, certificates showing that they were members in good standing of one of the Republican political parties, and safe-conduct passes for traveling within the Republican zone. By October, all the members of the party had some sort of personal identity documents. Escrivá continued to use the papers he had obtained from the legation of Honduras. Albareda had his card as a professor at a government school. The rest had acquired more or less satisfactory documents from a wide variety of shadowy figures. Certificates showing affiliation to a Republican party were obtained primarily from officials of several Anarchist trade unions that were anxious to increase their membership in Madrid and, therefore, not particularly choosy about their members. In January 1937, the government had begun evacuating nonessential personnel from Madrid, because it was difficult to provide the city with food and fuel. Safe-conduct passes to leave Madrid were, therefore, relatively easy to obtain.

Even with all necessary documents, travel was difficult because all train lines in and out of Madrid had been cut. Early in October, Jiménez Vargas found a place on a truck transporting barrels of wine out of the city and made his way to Valencia, where he told Casciaro and Botella that Escrivá and the others would arrive within a couple of days.

Casciaro had been drafted into the Republican army in June 1937, despite his poor eyesight, and was assigned to a non-combat unit in Valencia. There he found Botella, who had been in the city during the entire first year of the war, working in the Municipal Institute of Public Health. They were delighted to see Jiménez Vargas after more than a year's separation and to hear that Escrivá and the others would soon be in Valencia.

Escrivá, Albareda, Sainz, and Alvira somehow managed to find a car and enough gasoline to get to Valencia. At a mountain pass, militiamen who trained their guns on the car stopped them, but after requesting the driver's documents, they let them pass without further questions. On October 8, 1937, they reached Valen-

cia, where they had an emotional reunion with Casciaro and Botella.

In his conversations with Casciaro and Botella, Escrivá tried to instill the conviction that God was determined to carry out the Work but that it was up to them to do all in their power to contribute to its growth. Later that same evening, Jiménez Vargas repeated the message, stressing that their youth was no excuse for not taking the Work seriously. After he left, the two of them compared notes and reached the conclusion that, in Casciaro's words, "we are fully adult in the Work. . . . From today on, we have stopped being a couple of carefree youngsters and have no choice but to start being responsible men."

Professor Sellés, who had sheltered Escrivá in Madrid the previous fall, had moved to Valencia and put him up for the night. The next morning, Escrivá celebrated Mass at the Sellés's home. He asked Casciaro and Botella to see if they could find some candy for his hosts' children and some toys for their youngest daughter to thank them for their hospitality.

The group from Madrid joined Casciaro and Botella for lunch at a restaurant patronized mostly by soldiers and militiamen. As they were eating, some militiamen came in and began asking a few people at each table for their documents. Seeing Casciaro tremble as the militiamen approached, Escrivá advised him to stay calm and pray to the guardian angels. When the militiamen finally reached the table, the only documents they inspected were Casciaro's, the only ones that were fully in order.

That evening, Escrivá, Albareda, Jiménez Vargas, Alvira, and Sainz took the night train to Barcelona, telling Casciaro and Botella that they would let them know if they found a way that they too could cross over to the other zone. As the train pulled out, Escrivá smiled, put his hand inside his suit coat and silently gave his blessing to the two members of the Work who remained on the station platform.

In Barcelona, Albareda went to stay with his mother, while the other four members of the party found a room in a hotel. They established contact with a smuggler known as "Matthew the Milkman," who agreed to arrange the crossing into the tiny



Crossing the Pyrenees.

principality of Andorra. From there, they could easily cross over into France and then make their way to the Nationalist zone of Spain.

A few days after arriving, they sent a telegram to Casciaro asking him to come the next day. They assumed he would find some excuse for requesting a leave. Casciaro, who thought he was being summoned to cross over to the Nationalist zone, was not about to waste time requesting leave. While in basic training, he had left his unit without permission simply to be able to take a shower at the nearby home of a relative; and now he decided not to tell anyone he was going to Barcelona. A few days earlier, when he was alone in the regimental offices, he had taken a number of blank leave passes and stamped them with the colonel's stamp. He now filled one out to show that he had a few days leave and promptly deserted the regiment, taking the night train to Barcelona.

In Barcelona, Casciaro learned that he had been called there not to join the group in its attempted escape, but to learn how to contact a smuggler, so that he could organize the escape of another group at a later date. After a thorough briefing, he returned to Valencia. On the way back, he tried desperately to think of some plausible excuse for having been absent without leave for two days in the midst of a war, but found none. He entrusted himself to his guardian angel and returned to the regiment to face the consequences. Fortunately, the colonel liked the young soldier, who had a good record, and gave him an extraordinarily light sentence, sixteen days in military prison.

In Barcelona, things were going very slowly, and the group's meager supply of cash was dwindling at an alarming rate. The original plan had called for spending only a few days in the city, but making arrangements with the smugglers took much longer than expected. When it finally seemed that everything was in place, heavy rains swelled the mountain streams and rivers where they would have to cross, imposing further delays.

Casciaro was still serving his sentence when, on October 25, 1937, Jiménez Vargas came to Valencia to tell him and Botella about a change in plans and to invite them to join the group in

Barcelona in their attempt to cross the Pyrenees. While awaiting Casciaro's release from prison, Jiménez Vargas traveled to the little town of Daimiel in La Mancha, where Miguel Fisac, another architecture student, had been hiding in the attic of his parents' house since the war broke out. When Fisac learned of the escape plans, he decided to join the group.

On October 31, 1937, the day he was released from prison, Casciaro deserted again. Using the blank leave passes Casciaro had obtained earlier, Botella had prepared papers granting himself, Casciaro, and Fisac a few days leave to settle family matters in Barcelona. With these papers, the three of them and Jiménez Vargas took the noon train to Barcelona. Because of flooding, they had to leave the train at the little town of Amposta, where they spent the night. They crossed the Ebro river the next day, in a cart pulled by a donkey, and resumed their train trip on the other side, reaching Barcelona late in the evening on November 1, 1937.

Endless Waiting in Barcelona

Once the group from Valencia arrived, it seemed that their departure would be imminent, but the arrest and execution of the members of another party caught trying to cross into Andorra caused the smugglers to break off all contact for two weeks.

Food in Barcelona was very scarce, even for people with money and ration cards. A well-to-do family had an apartment in the same building where several members of the Work were staying; they were so hungry that their six-year-old son would stand in line for hours to buy cigarettes in order to exchange them with a soldier for a ration of the bad bread given to the troops. The dog of the family with whom Casciaro and others were staying was so famished that one day it ate Casciaro's leather belt, a pair of socks Botella had left in the bathroom, and their only bar of soap.

The members of Escrivá's group did not have ration cards, and it would have been dangerous to try to obtain them. They did not have money to buy enough food for the eight of them in a restau-

rant or on the black market. Most days' breakfast consisted of a watery malt drink with two or three small salty biscuits. Normally they had only one other meal, and that was only slightly more substantial than their breakfast. Some days they ate at a reasonably clean restaurant where the meal consisted of donkey meat with stewed mushrooms, but the portions were very small. Most days they went to a small, dirty restaurant where the food was *less refined* but the portions slightly larger. Escrivá often saved his morning biscuits or part of his meager dinner to give it to the children of the family with whom they were staying.

One day, Sainz saw a sign in a restaurant window advertising that yogurt would be available the next day. Jiménez Vargas, the doctor in the group, advised spending a little more for such nutritious food that might help strengthen them for the arduous trek through the Pyrenees mountains. While they were enjoying this delicacy, the police came in and began going from table to table, checking the documents of everyone in the restaurant. The situation was critical. In wartime, military passes were usually issued for only short periods of time. To avoid arousing suspicion, Botella had filled in their passes for only a few days. As their stay in Barcelona lengthened, they had been forced to alter the dates several times, carefully scrapping off the old dates with a razor blade and filling in new ones. If anyone had inspected their documents carefully, or simply held them up to the light, the changes would have been obvious. Escrivá and his companions prayed fervently to their guardian angels for protection while trying to converse as if nothing were happening. Apparently they succeeded in disguising their nervousness because, when their table was the only one left to be inspected, the police walked out without asking for their documents.

Escrivá read in the newspaper that a fellow law student from the University of Zaragoza, Pascual Galbe, was serving as a judge of the court of appeals in Barcelona. Galbe had always professed not to be a believer, but they had been good friends, and Escrivá was anxious to see him. Alvira had been Galbe's high school classmate and went to tell him that Escrivá was in town and would like to get together. Galbe invited Escrivá to eat at his home. When

they met, Galbe was deeply moved and offered to help him escape.

Escrivá declined the offer, pointing out that helping him could endanger Galbe's family. His friend then offered to find him a job as a lawyer at the court, but Escrivá declined that offer as well. "Look," he said, "I never practiced law in the past, because my only interest was to be a priest. Why should I start practicing now, when you are ready to shoot me simply for being a priest?" The conversation then turned to religion. When Galbe expressed skepticism, Escrivá strongly urged him to study the matter more deeply: "Reading a couple of books makes you say such things. But a great number of brilliant people have written other books dealing with these issues. Once you've read some of them, you'll be able to speak knowledgeably of these matters."

Galbe invited Escrivá to continue their conversation later that afternoon in his office at the court. When he realized that Escrivá was determined to flee through the mountains, he invited him to witness the trial of someone who had been caught attempting to flee. When the death sentence was pronounced, he said, "See? They have orders to shoot on sight. If they catch you, tell them you're my brother. I'll do what I can for you."

As the days grew into weeks, it became difficult for the members of Escrivá's group to avoid arousing suspicion. The Republican government had recently moved from Valencia to Barcelona, and the move had brought with it increased surveillance. To give the impression that they had been evacuated from their homes and had found employment in Barcelona, Escrivá and his companions left the apartments where they were staying each day as if they were going to work. They spent much of the day walking around the city. As they did so, they made their daily meditation and prayed the rosary. All churches had been closed by government order, but when they passed one, they made acts of abandonment in the hands of God and prayed spiritual communions. Their long walks through the city, in addition to being safer than staying holed up in an apartment, helped them train for the arduous mountainous journey that lay ahead, although the lack of food prevented them from building up much strength.

While waiting for the opportunity to leave Barcelona, Escrivá carried out his priestly ministry as best he could. One day, an old friend from Zaragoza told him that his mother, who was a schoolteacher in a nearby town, had not been able to go to confession for more than a year because she could not find a priest. Escrivá immediately offered to take the bus to the seaside town where she lived, accompanied by several other members of the group waiting to leave Barcelona.

The bus dropped them off near the beach, and they walked down to the water. Alvira relates, "I turned around and saw the Father gazing out to sea. He was saying aloud the Hail Holy Queen. We all joined in as he led the prayer. I was deeply moved to see how the Father lived in our Lady's presence. We were delighted by the sea's beauty, but it reminded the Father of Mary, and he greeted her by reciting the Hail Holy Queen."

Escrivá went to his friend's mother's home and heard her confession. On the way back to Barcelona that evening, a Nationalist bomber attack forced them to leave the bus and take cover in a field, but eventually they made it back to Barcelona unharmed.

Hiding Out in Rialp Forest

Their smuggler, Matthew the Milkman, finally reestablished contact on November 16, 1937, and told them that everything was set for the 19th. They would take a bus to a point about eighty miles northwest of Barcelona. They would then attempt to cross over the mountains on foot, into the independent principality of Andorra, and make their way from there into France.

For the first leg, they split into three groups. Escrivá, Albareda, and Jiménez Vargas, who were old enough to arouse less suspicion, would leave on the 19th and take the bus all the way to Oliana, a hamlet located about twenty-five miles, as the crow flies, from Andorra. Casciaro, Botella, and Fisac, who were of military age and therefore more likely to be subject to close scrutiny, would take the same bus but would get off at Sanahuja, a little more than ten miles from Oliana. They would then head cross-country to avoid a military checkpoint at Basella, where documents would be

rigorously inspected because of the proximity of Andorra. Alvira and Sainz would take the bus two days later to avoid having too many young men of military age traveling together.

Escrivá, Albareda, and Jiménez Vargas reached Oliana without incident. There they were met by Antonio Bach Pallares, a watchmaker who was also the town clerk, mailman, and sacristan of the local parish. He led them to the town of Peramola, about an hour's walk away, where they were to spend the night in a barn owned by the mayor.

The plan called for Casciaro, Botella, and Fisac to join them a few hours later in the barn, but when Bach returned shortly before dawn with his fourteen-year-old son Paco, the three young men still had not come. Bach tried to reassure Escrivá that they would arrive soon but insisted that he and his companions leave before it got light. At dawn they still had not arrived, so Escrivá left an encouraging note in which he asked Casciaro to do a pencil sketch of Paco as a token of their gratitude. They set out for the town of Vilaró, about three miles away, where they were met by fifty-year-old Pere Sala, bearing a shotgun slung over his shoulder. Escrivá immediately celebrated Mass, which Sala's family attended.

As the hours dragged by, Escrivá, Albareda, and Jiménez Vargas became more and more concerned about the fate of Casciaro, Botella, and Fisac. Not until the next morning did they hear that the younger men had reached Peramola the night before and would join them that day. Escrivá continued fasting so he could say Mass for them as soon as they came.

When they arrived around noon on the 21st, they talked about their adventure. The plan had been for one of them to carry a newspaper and utter a prearranged password to their guide in Sanahuja. Casciaro, who was supposed to say the password, was so nervous that he began to stutter and could not get it out. When he finally did, a red-haired young man walked past without looking at him and said under his breath, "Follow me." After walking down the road a distance, he headed off into the brush, and they followed him. When they tried to speak to him, they discovered that he did not speak Spanish or Catalan, the languages spoken in the area.

They set out cross-country around 3 P.M. and should have reached Peramola by nightfall. At midnight, the town was nowhere in sight, and the guide was hopelessly lost. Botella tried to help him find his bearings, pointing out where the sun had set. After almost twenty-four hours of hiking through the woods, they finally reached the barn on the outskirts of Peramola, where they slept for a few hours before continuing on to Sala's farmhouse in Vilaró.

Casciaro, Botella, and Fisac, together with Escrivá, Albareda, and Jiménez Vargas, spent the night of November 21, 1937, in what had been the rectory of the parish church of Pallerols, a hamlet located a mile or two from Vilaró. Both the church and the rectory had been sacked. Their guide led them to a small room on the upper floor whose only window had been boarded up and whose floor was covered with straw.

By the flickering light of a tallow candle, Casciaro saw an anxious, dejected expression on Escrivá's face that he had never seen before. Escrivá was arguing passionately, but quietly, with Jiménez Vargas. Botella, who was closer and could hear part of their conversation, told Casciaro that Escrivá felt he should not abandon the members of the Work who were facing danger in Madrid and that he wanted to return to the capital.

Escrivá spent the night in prayer, sobbing quietly, torn between the need for freedom to carry out *Opus Dei* and exercise his priestly ministry and the sense that he should share the fate of the members of the Work and his family members who were still in Madrid. Amid extreme inner turmoil, he did something he had never done before—request an extraordinary sign to resolve his dilemma. Moved by his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who is invoked as the Mystical Rose, he asked her to give him a gilded rose if God wanted him to continue the attempt to cross over to the other zone of Spain.

When the others awakened the next morning and began to prepare for Mass, Escrivá remained deeply distressed. During the night, when Escrivá had protested that he did not have the strength to make it through the mountains, Jiménez Vargas had told him, "We are going to take you to the other side, dead or

alive.” But this morning, neither Jiménez Vargas nor anyone else said anything. Escrivá left the room alone, probably to pray in the vandalized church. When he returned, his face was radiant with joy and peace. In his hand, he held a gilded wooden rose. In 1936, when the militia sacked the church, they had torn down the carved and gilded wooden altarpiece and carried it outside to burn. The rose, which had probably formed part of the frame of roses encircling the image of Our Lady of the Rosary, had survived. Escrivá saw it as the sign he had requested.

Escrivá rarely spoke of this event. When asked about the rose, he would usually change the subject or limit himself to commenting that our Lady is the mystical rose. Del Portillo, his closest collaborator and first successor, explained why Escrivá did not usually talk about this or the other extraordinary graces he received:

First of all, out of humility, since he was the protagonist of these events, the one who received God’s special graces, his “caresses,” of which there have been many in the Work’s history. Second, he didn’t want even his children to know about these spiritual divine favors, so that we would all know and understand that we should do Opus Dei, not because of *miracles*, but because it is God’s will.

After Mass, Sala returned with Alvira and Sainz, who had left Barcelona two days after the others and had made the trip without incident. The group was now complete. Sala led them on a two- or three-mile hike into the heart of the dense Rialp forest. There they would hide out while their guides finished assembling the larger party, with whom they would attempt to cross the Pyrenees into Andorra. They arrived at a rustic shelter, partly dug into the ground and roofed with logs and branches. They dubbed it “St. Raphael’s cabin,” in honor of the archangel who is the patron of Opus Dei’s activities with young people. Life there was relatively secure. The forest was dense and housed many refugees, some of whom were armed, so militia patrols rarely dared enter.

What the forest lacked, though, was comfort. Food continued to be scarce, and at the end of November, the air was cold and damp. Sala provided one thin cotton blanket for every two refugees. The first night they lit a fire, but because they had to keep their whereabouts hidden, the hut soon filled with smoke. They preferred, instead, to face the cold. To make matters worse, they also discovered that previous inhabitants had left the place full of lice.

As he had done in the legation of Honduras and again in Barcelona, Escrivá drew up a complete schedule that included Mass, mental prayer, rosary, and other practices of piety; hikes to build up their strength; lectures given by the various refugees; informal get-togethers; and time for cleaning the hut. One person was in charge of gathering wood, another of keeping a diary, and a third of keeping the hut in order.

Casciaro writes that at the time he “didn’t fully understand why we spent so much time cleaning our cabin and surroundings, why we kept our few things in such meticulous order, and, in general, why we were so busy doing things that seemed to me unnecessary.” The principal reason lay in the spirit of *Opus Dei*, which urges its members to use their time well in God’s service and to attend to order and cleanliness out of love of God, as ways of growing in holiness. But Escrivá also insisted on these things to keep the members occupied, thereby avoiding the impatience, laziness, and discouragement that could easily penetrate their spirit as the days dragged by, with no clear idea of how long they would have to continue to hide out in the forest.

In their informal get-togethers, Escrivá talked not about the trek that lay ahead of them but of the future growth of the Work, its expansion to other cities in Spain and throughout the world, and the types of apostolic activities it would promote. “Dream,” he told them, “and your dreams will fall short.” The contrast between Escrivá’s grandiose vision of the future and their situation as fugitives in the midst of a forest could hardly have been more stark. Nonetheless, Jiménez Vargas later recalled that what Escrivá proposed came across to him not as dreams but as realistic plans for specific undertakings, no matter how bold and optimistic.

The group spent a week waiting in the forest. Winter was

approaching, and each passing day made it more likely that they would encounter snow at the higher elevations. This was a serious concern. Snow would make them more visible and would make the trek far more difficult. None of them was physically prepared for the ordeal. Escrivá's situation was especially problematic. He had lost a great deal of weight since the war began, and his general physical condition had deteriorated considerably. Cold weather might trigger another attack of the rheumatism that had crippled him for almost two weeks a year earlier, when he was hiding in Dr. Suil's asylum.

None of them had adequate equipment for hiking in the mountains at any time, much less in winter. Jiménez Vargas had bought Escrivá a pair of rubber-soled boots that seemed appropriate for the mountains, but they soon broke down. The others wore cheap canvas shoes with hemp soles, more suitable for walking on the beach in summer than for climbing mountains in winter. The rest of their clothing was no better.

On the evening of November 27, 1937, Sala arrived, not with the squirrel stew they had come to expect for dinner but with orders to pack up and move out. The time had come to head out of the Rialp forest for the border with Andorra.

Crossing the Mountains

The group hiked a few miles and then stopped to wait for others who would be joining their party. As they sat in the darkness, Escrivá was again tormented by doubts. Finding the gilded rose in Pallerols had convinced him that he would not offend God by escaping to the Nationalist zone, but now he once again felt a powerful urge to return to Madrid to share the fate of those he had left behind. Jiménez Vargas grasped him by the arm, prepared to force him to continue, if necessary. But, when the fugitives they were waiting for arrived and the word was given to move out, Escrivá went without protest.

A few hours later, in a large cave a mile or two north of Peramola, the party met "Antonio," a twenty-three-year-old smuggler who would guide them to Andorra. Antonio, whose real

name was Josep Cirera, addressed the men seated at his feet in the candlelit depths of the cave: "I give the orders here, and the rest of you just do as you are told. We'll be walking single file. And keep your mouth shut. I don't want any noise. When I have something to say, I'll say it to the man behind me, and each person will pass it on to the man behind. Nobody is to stop or fall behind. If anyone gets sick and can't continue, he'll be left where he is. If anyone wants to stay with him, he'll be left as well."

More than one person shuddered, fearing what lay ahead. The thoughts of the members of the Work turned to Escrivá. They were confident that God would help them and convinced that their primary mission was to ensure that the founder reached Andorra safely.

After they left the cave and began scrambling uphill among pines and mountain oaks through dense fog, the line of refugees began to grow, its numbers swelling at every crossroad. Escrivá, who was right behind Cirera, soon managed to pierce the guide's silence and make friends with him.

They reached Ribalera glen shortly after sunrise on Sunday, November 28, 1937, and spent the day there. By this time, the party had grown to more than twenty men. Despite the curses and blasphemies that had punctuated the previous night's march, Escrivá announced, "I'm going to say Mass. Anyone who doesn't want to be respectful shouldn't attend."

A stone placed atop another near the cliff wall served as an altar, but it was so low Escrivá had to kneel throughout the Mass. Antonio Dalmases, a Catalan student who had joined the party at some point during the previous night, recorded in his diary his impressions of the Mass.

On a rock, kneeling down, almost prone to the ground, a priest with us is saying Mass. He doesn't say it as other priests do in churches. He says the prayers out loud; he is almost weeping, as are we. Some of us are kneeling, some lying down, others half-sitting or standing, holding onto the rocks so as not to fall. There is no sound except the priest's voice. His clear and heartfelt words penetrate our souls. I have never attended

a Mass like today's. I don't know if it is because of the circumstances or because the celebrant is a saint.

Around four in the afternoon, after only a few hours rest, Cirera gave the order to head out. Normally he preferred to travel at night to reduce the chance of being spotted by militia patrols, but the climb to the 5,000-foot peak of Mount Aubens lay immediately ahead. It was so steep and treacherous that he decided they should conquer it before the light failed.

Shortly into the hardest part of the ascent, Alvira collapsed. Cirera gave the order to leave him behind and keep moving to reach the summit before nightfall. Even if Alvira somehow managed to scale Aubens, the guide said, he clearly would not be able to withstand the long hikes and ascents that lay ahead. Escrivá took Cirera by the arm and moved off a few paces. Casciaro heard a few snatches of their conversation, carried by the wind:

Keep in mind that he is a very courageous man who has done his country much good and still has a lot to do. You are a man with a heart. Be patient and let us help him to the summit. I guarantee he will recover during our next rest period. You will have the satisfaction, one day, of having saved the life of an exceptional person.

Cirera, who years later commented that Escrivá "was a very persuasive man," gave in.

Alvira felt unable to continue, but Escrivá encouraged him, "Don't worry. You'll continue with us all, right to the end." With help from others in the group, Alvira struggled to his feet. The party reached the peak of Aubens just as night was falling. After a short cold rest in the grass that covered the summit, they started down the mountain's northern side. The path was steep and slippery, and they were often forced to grab hold of thorn bushes to keep from falling. At one point, Jiménez slipped off the path and started rolling down the slope toward a river that could be heard below. One of the group scurried down to rescue him from the river but found him safe and unhurt.

They spent the rest of the night of November 28, 1937, hiking to Casa Fenollet, near the town of Montanisell, where they would pass the daylight hours. They covered ten miles, during which they climbed a total of about 4,000 feet, forded one river, and crossed another on a bridge—where they would have been completely exposed had a car come along.

In the barn at Casa Fenollet, the members of the group received Holy Communion from the Hosts Escrivá had consecrated the previous day, ate a very meager meal, and tried to get some rest. In the middle of the morning, two militiamen stopped at the farmhouse asking the owners if they had seen anything suspicious. The farmer's wife served them ham (a dish that is especially prized in the area), with several glasses of wine, and sent them away convinced that she was ready to help them capture any fugitives.

Escrivá slept little if at all, devoting the time to prayer and to encouraging the members of the party who seemed especially discouraged or tired. The Catalan student, Dalmases, described him in his diary: "He encourages everyone and bolsters all our spirits, almost as if God had given him a mandate to do so." Casciaro reports that when he woke up and noticed that Escrivá was not asleep he became "cross inside. I thought to myself that if he did not make the most of those hours to rest, he would succumb later." Around two in the afternoon, their hosts served them abundant portions of beans with mutton, the one substantial meal they would have on the five-day journey to Andorra.

The members of Escrivá's group had already discarded heavy items during the ascent of Aubens. Before setting out from Casa Fenollet, they decided to leave behind spare clothing and other objects that might prove useful later on but that weighed them down. After another nap, they set out again around six in the evening.

Their guide gave each person a hunk of bread and a round cheese, about five inches in diameter and one and a half inches thick, with the warning that they would be given no further rations until they reached Andorra two and a half days later. To everyone's amazement, Sainz drew out of his pocket a small slide rule and began to calculate how large a portion they could have

for each meal. Escrivá played along, but Botella and Casciaro reacted by devouring the cheese and bread all at once, arguing that it made more sense to carry food in their stomachs than in their packs.

In sharp contrast to their meager rations, Dalmases had abundant provisions. Seeing his basket full of fried chicken legs, Escrivá joked that he must have discovered a new animal, a cross between a chicken and a centipede, the “chickenpede.” The other members of Escrivá’s group soon nicknamed Dalmases—whose name they learned only later—the “centipede kid.”

As they plodded forward, the party grew increasingly exhausted and weak from hunger. They lost track of time as they stumbled through the cold and darkness. Casciaro describes his experience:

It was rather like making your first transoceanic flight, except that it lasted several days and was infinitely worse and more excruciating. . . . I had no notion of what day or what time it was. The night marches seemed endless, and exhaustion, sleepiness, and hunger made them feel even longer.

During the night of November 29, 1937, they covered another ten miles and climbed a total of almost 3,000 feet. After leaving Casa Fenollet, they ascended Mount Santa Fe, about 4,000 feet above sea level, and then headed steeply downhill over loose rocks to a valley where militia units, tipped off by the barking of dogs, had recently executed an entire expedition of refugees. Although Escrivá’s group heard dogs barking around them, they crossed the valley safely and started up to the peak of Mount Ares, at 4,500 feet above sea level. The climb was exhausting because they had to ascend more than 2,500 feet in a couple of miles. Escrivá’s heavy breathing and rapid pulse brought him close to collapse. The others in the group heard him repeating softly to himself Christ’s words in the Gospel, “I have not come to be served but to serve.” Despite his protests, Botella and Fisac at times carried him so that his feet were not touching the ground. When walking on his own, Escrivá had to hold on to thorn bushes to pull himself up

the steep slope. Finally they reached the summit of Mount Ares, but after about a half-hour's rest, Cirera gave the order to move out again.

A short time later, they stopped again, and Cirera disappeared. As time went by, the members of the party became anxious. Some feared that he might have deserted them. When he finally returned, he told them that he had noticed that someone was missing and had gone back to their last resting spot, where he had found him exhausted and unwilling to go on. Fearing an informer, he had taken out his pistol and forced him to continue.

Although the stop had not been long, the cold and damp of a November night high in the mountains, combined with anxiety over the whereabouts of their guide, had taken their toll. Shortly after they resumed the march, Albareda succumbed to fatigue. He stood motionless and silent, smiling vaguely. If someone led him by the hand, he resumed walking, but very slowly. As soon as they let go of his hand, he stopped and just stood there, appearing not to hear anything that was said to him. Fortunately, the path was mostly downhill and their destination was not far away, so with help from others, who were themselves on the verge of collapse, Albareda managed to reach the barn at Baridá, where they spent the daylight hours of November 30.

The group set out again as soon as the sun set on November 30, 1937. They did not have to scale any mountains that night, but during the twelve-mile hike to Campmajor, they frequently had to wade through icy streams, and their clothes were soon soaking wet. A Christmas carol ran through Casciaro's head incessantly. When he tried to say the rosary silently, he often lost count and ended up saying mysteries of twenty or thirty Hail Marys. Other members of the party had similar experiences due to physical and mental exhaustion.

In the midst of their own sufferings, they worried about Escrivá. Casciaro reports:

In my own state of mental confusion, I often thought, "If I feel this bad, how must the Father feel?" I had begun the adventure of Barcelona and the Pyrenees crossing in relatively good

physical shape. In Torrevieja, Albacete, and Valencia, I hadn't suffered the hunger the Father had for over a year in Madrid. I was thirteen years younger than he was and in good health, while he had suffered bouts of high fever with a prolonged attack of acute rheumatism.

These thoughts helped me to pray for him. But certain things I noticed bothered me. The Father refused to protect himself from the cold by putting newspapers underneath his sweater like everyone else. He tried to eat less so we could all have more. When we rested for a few hours in barns or caves, I noticed he hardly slept; I supposed it was to pray more. All this edified me, but I did not fully understand it; and my love for him made me wish I could change it.

The party halted at dawn on December 1, 1937, in a high field where boulders and bushes provided cover. At one point, they heard snatches of bugles and drums, probably from a nearby militia camp. Knowing they were close to militia units made the fugitives even more nervous, although Casciaro says, "At that stage I, for one, was more concerned about the cold than about being caught. It was frightfully cold. A merciless, bitter kind of cold that went through to my bones." According to Jiménez Vargas, "In the midst of all of this," Escrivá "[k]ept his peace and joy . . . even when he had to repeat countless times the short prayer '*Fiat*' [Let it be done]."

They spent the whole day lying or sitting on steep, slippery ground, exposed to the wind that swept down from the mountains. At times the sun came out, but as the day advanced the clouds thickened, and by early afternoon a light snow began to fall. Any significant amount of snow during this last and most dangerous part of the journey could have proved fatal, but fortunately the snow held off until they were safely in Andorra.

Before resuming their journey, shortly after sundown on December 1, Escrivá's group prayed to our Lady and to their guardian angels. They ate their last remaining rations. The march that night traversed heavily patrolled areas near the border, where militia units had orders to shoot without warning at anyone who

seemed suspicious. After climbing about 1,300 feet, the party slowly and painfully descended amid loose rocks that easily rolled downhill, creating enough noise to attract the attention of any nearby militiamen. As they approached a stream, the guide warned them to keep absolutely silent, because he had heard a patrol passing nearby. He then began to search the area.

The party huddled near the stream at below freezing temperatures, immobile in their wet clothes. Escrivá seemed on the verge of total collapse. He shivered uncontrollably, and his limbs became rigid. Jiménez Vargas had run out of the sugared wine that he had administered as a stimulant to members of the group at critical moments. All he could do was to rub Escrivá's limbs and cover him with more wet clothes. Escrivá did not respond, and Jiménez Vargas feared that when the guide finally returned, he would be unable to move.

When Cirera came back, after about two hours, Escrivá could barely get to his feet; but once the party started to move, he gradually recovered enough strength to keep up the pace. On the assumption that the guards were not likely to come back along the same route for quite a while, Cirera told the refugees to watch for a patrol to pass by on the opposite side of the river. Eventually they heard voices and footsteps moving down the trail. After giving the militia enough time to get out of earshot, Cirera gave orders to ford the stream and cross the trail that paralleled its bank. After a steep uphill climb to the Cabra Morta pass, they began a descent so dangerous that most of them would not even have attempted it in daylight.

Soon they stopped again and hid for half an hour until Cirera decided that it was safe to begin the last leg into Andorra. They had walked for about fifteen minutes when suddenly they heard rifle shots coming from behind them. By that time, however, they were out of range and in Andorra. Cirera waited until they were a safe distance from the border, which militia units had been known to cross, before telling them that they had arrived. The refugees greeted the news with shouts of joy. Escrivá began to say the Hail Holy Queen in thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin. It was just before dawn on December 2, 1937.

In Andorra and Lourdes

At sunrise, Escrivá and his companions set out for the nearby town of Sant Julià de Loria, where they had a cup of coffee. They then looked for a church where they could offer thanks. It was the first time in a year and a half that they had entered a church that had not been desecrated. After once again reciting the Hail Holy Queen, they began walking toward the principality's capital, Andorra la Vella.

From there, they sent a telegram to Albareda's brother, who was living in the French border town of Saint Jean-de-Luz, at the western end of the Pyrenees. He agreed to arrange for a taxi to pick them up in Andorra and bring them to Saint Jean-de-Luz, where they planned to cross into the Nationalist zone of Spain. While they waited for their papers as political refugees and a transit pass through France, they stayed at a hotel in a small town called Les Escaldes, a few miles from Andorra la Vella.

During their first day in Andorra, Escrivá's hands began to swell and became painful. Jiménez Vargas initially feared the onset of a rheumatic attack but soon discovered that the swelling was due to many small thorns that had lodged in his hands when he had grabbed onto bushes in an effort to stay on his feet.

The snow that had threatened the last stage of their trek began to fall heavily on December 3, 1937. After the first Mass that Escrivá had been able to offer in a year and a half at a real altar and with vestments, they returned to Andorra la Vella to have pictures taken. They would need them at the border, but they also wanted them as documents for the history of Opus Dei.

The snow that blocked the pass into France forced them to remain in Andorra until December 10, 1937. Early on the morning of the 10th, Escrivá's group, and another twenty people who had crossed the Pyrenees with them, piled into a small truck fitted with temporary seats and snow chains. At several points, they had to get out and walk beside the truck. When they reached Soldeu, the truck could go no farther, so they set out on foot, having wrapped their feet and legs in newspaper to protect against the cold. The snow, which had drifted in spots to knee-deep, turned

the newspaper into paste, but the refugees forged on for another nine miles and climbed over an 8,000-foot-high pass to Pas de la Casa. There they crowded onto a fourteen-seat bus that took them to the French border town of L'Hospitalet, where Escrivá's group found the taxi that Albareda's brother had sent for them.

The eight refugees, soaking wet from their long hike through the snow, crowded into the unheated taxi around five in the afternoon, bound for the Spanish border at Irún. They spent the night of December 10, 1937, in the French town of Saint Gaudens, where they stayed at a rundown hotel. At 6:30 the next morning, they piled back into the taxi and set out for Lourdes. Escrivá was still dressed in torn, stained brown pants, a navy-blue turtleneck sweater, and brown rubber-soled boots. When they reached the Basilica at Lourdes, he had difficulty in convincing the priest in charge of the sacristy to allow him to say Mass.

As he started to make the sign of the cross at the beginning of Mass, he leaned toward Casciaro, who was serving the Mass, and whispered, "I suppose you will offer up this Mass for the conversion of your father and ask our Lord to grant him many years of life as a Catholic." Casciaro reflects his thoughts at the time:

To tell the truth, I had formulated no such intention. In fact, at that moment I was experiencing the natural weakness and lack of concentration that comes from rising early and not having eaten breakfast. I was struck by the Father's having a big enough heart to remember my family problems when he was about to give fervent thanks to our Lady and commend so many important things to her. Deeply touched, I answered him, also in a whisper, "I will, Father." Then he added quietly: "Do that, my son. Ask the Blessed Virgin for it, and you will see what marvels she will grant you."

The group reached the town of Saint Jean-de-Luz, near the French-Spanish border, shortly after sunset on December 11, 1937. Escrivá was unsuccessful in his efforts to contact the bishop of Madrid, but he did manage to reach two bishops he knew, one

of whom vouched for him and his companions with the border guards. Late in the evening, they crossed the border into the Nationalist zone of Spain.

* * *

Success in crossing the Pyrenees and reaching the Nationalist zone of Spain meant that Escrivá and the members of the Work who accompanied him would be able to carry out their apostolate without fear of religious persecution. Wartime conditions, however, meant that they would still face great obstacles, especially because they were penniless. In the meantime, del Portillo and others remained trapped in Madrid.

Exile in Burgos

 DECEMBER 1937—SEPTEMBER 1938

Christmas in Pamplona

When Escrivá and the other members of the group reentered Spain on December 11, 1937, none of them had any idea of how long it would be before they could return to Madrid, but they were hopeful that the end of the war was near. In fact, it would drag on for another fifteen months. During that time, they struggled to renew their contacts with the residents and students of DYA, whom the war had scattered far and wide, to rebuild Opus Dei's apostolates, and to prepare to reopen the residence and begin Opus Dei's expansion to other cities and countries.

Escrivá's group spent the night of December 11 in a little town near the border. The next day, they went to San Sebastian and rented a room in a cheap hotel. Some Theresian nuns provided Escrivá with a few items of clothing. With the help of friends who were staying in the city, the other members of the expedition acquired some secondhand clothes and replaced their worn-out canvas shoes with used street shoes.

Soon members of the group had to go their separate ways. Albareda stayed in Saint Jean-de-Luz. Alvira headed for Zaragoza. Jiménez Vargas reported for military duty as a doctor. Casciaro and Botella were taken under armed guard to Pamplona to report for military duty. On December 17, Escrivá also left for Pamplona, where a friend, Bishop Marcelino Olaechea, offered him hospitality in the bishop's palace and bought him a cassock.

Escrivá went on a retreat upon arriving in Pamplona. Although physically weak from the rigors of the trek through the Pyrenees and the privations of the previous eighteen months, he resolved to

sleep less so as to have more time for prayer and to atone for all the offenses against God the civil war had brought with it. He resolved to spend every Thursday night entirely in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and to sleep only five hours a night during the rest of the week.

On December 24, Escrivá visited Botella and Casciaro at their barracks. At midnight, he returned with Albareda, who had come to Pamplona for Christmas. Although Botella and Casciaro were on guard duty, Escrivá and Albareda managed to convince the officer in charge to let them spend a few minutes together. They celebrated Christmas Eve in the barracks, talking about their plans for contacting people they had known at DYA. Albareda had managed to scrape together enough money to buy *turrón*, a typical Spanish Christmas candy. Botella recalls that he was “deeply moved by such tokens of affection and family life amid our extraordinary circumstances. I was very happy and felt the joy of my dedication to God.” On Christmas day, after Botella and Casciaro finished their tour of guard duty, the four of them had lunch in a restaurant. They then went back to Escrivá’s room at the bishop’s residence for a long informal get-together and wrote letters and postcards to members of the Work and friends all over Spain.

The army did not have enough space for all the soldiers who were crowded into Pamplona, so anyone who could afford to live outside the barracks could easily get permission to do so. The schedule of the barracks made it impossible to attend daily Mass, so Escrivá advised Botella and Casciaro to look for a room in town without worrying too much about how they would pay for it.

During the Christmas season, Escrivá remained in Pamplona, spending as much time as possible with Botella and Casciaro. Bishop Olaechea urged him to stay with him in the bishop’s residence until he was able to return to Madrid, but Escrivá was anxious to visit the members of the Work who were scattered around the country and to reestablish contact with the people they had known prior to the war. Moving to the nearby city of Burgos would facilitate such encounters. Because it was the Nationalists’ headquarters, members of the Work and their friends were far more likely to be stationed in Burgos or to have reason to

come there. Burgos also had better rail and bus service, so it would be easier to go to see those who could not come. In addition, Albareda was in Burgos, working on a plan for reorganizing secondary education, and Jiménez Vargas was there temporarily while awaiting an assignment to the front. The army had assigned Casciario and Botella to support services, so there was a chance that one or both of them would end up in one of the many administrative offices in Burgos.

Moving to Burgos

On January 7, 1938, Escrivá left Pamplona after urging Botella and Casciario to do whatever they could to get themselves assigned to Burgos. The next day, he arrived in Burgos after a brief visit to Vitoria. Burgos represented a new stage of Opus Dei's life. After a year and a half of forced inactivity, it was essential to rebuild the apostolate and to lay the foundations for a new expansion. Escrivá's first task was to write a long letter to the members of the Work to offer them "lights and encouragement and the means not only to persevere in our spirit, but to sanctify yourselves in the exercise of the discreet, effective, and manly apostolate that we live in the same way as the first Christians did."

"Nothing," he told them at the beginning of the letter dated January 9, 1938, "is impossible: *omnia possum* . . . [I can do all things (Phil 4: 13)]. Can you forget our ten years of consoling experience? Well then! God and Daring!" He invited them to focus on their interior life through prayer, mortification, and presence of God and to meditate frequently on the reality of being sons of God who were not alone but rather "links in a chain."

The sense of communion with each other and with Escrivá is a recurring theme of the letter. Their love for the Work should manifest itself, he told them, in concern for the Father and their brothers in the Work. He urged them to "live each day with particular interest, a special communion of the saints" with the other members of the Work. He suggested that they resolve to pray for the Father, to sacrifice themselves for him, and to unite themselves to him. At the same time, he asked them to put into practice with

each other St. Paul's advice to the Galatians, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6: 2). Concretely, he insisted that they write frequently to those in Burgos "although you have nothing to say," and to all their brothers, "even if they don't answer you." "If you need me," he said, "call me. You have the right and the duty to call me. And I have the duty to come by the fastest possible means of locomotion."

To help them make good use of their time, he urged them to study a foreign language and, whenever possible, to undertake some professional or artistic work. Returning to the topic of apostolate, he outlined for them a plan:

- (1) Your interior life, which obtains the grace needed to make effective the apostolate of those of us who are free;
- (2) Your good example, with manliness;
- (3) Look for a friend or two or three. Not more. And let each one of them look for someone else, to bring him along our path. Don't tell me that you can't; say rather that you don't use the means.
- (4) Write to our St. Raphael boys and to our St. Gabriel people. Bring them to frequent the sacraments, to love the Work, to win others, and to help economically support our supernatural undertaking;
- (5) Try to encourage our friends to write every two weeks to Burgos and to come periodically to see the Father. As soon as possible, we will receive them in our house of St. Michael in Burgos.

At the end of the letter, he requested that they include a petition for the Father in the short official prayers of the Work that he had taught them.

In Burgos, Escrivá developed a persistent fever, cough, and hoarseness that led him to fear he might have tuberculosis, especially since he had ministered for years to many tuberculosis patients in the hospitals of Madrid. He had never worried about his own health, but the contagiousness of tuberculosis would make it impossible to continue close personal contact with young people. Eventually Vallespín and Botella convinced him to consult a lung specialist, despite his reluctance to spend money on himself. The doctor told him that, although he did not have TB, he had a

serious respiratory problem and should consult a nose and throat specialist. That doctor could not determine the source of his persistent cough and fevers and concluded that whatever was wrong with him was "in no-man's-land."

The reference in Escrivá's January 9, 1938, letter to receiving friends as soon as possible in "our house of St. Michael in Burgos" reflected his desire to find an apartment or small house that would provide the minimum of privacy and independence necessary to receive visitors. That desire, however, would remain unfulfilled. Burgos was overflowing with more than twice its peacetime population. It would have been difficult to find anything, even with money. Albareda had managed to put his hands on a small sum, but they had decided to spend most of it on a chalice and tabernacle for the next center of the Work, wherever that might be, so he and Escrivá had to settle for a room in a modest boardinghouse.

Escrivá wanted to set out immediately to see members of the Work, former residents and students at DYA, and the bishops of the cities through which he passed. First, however, he needed to obtain a safe conduct pass, which would enable him to move about freely. In 1931, Escrivá had met General Luis Orgaz, a neighbor of the family to whose home he had moved the Blessed Sacrament during the burning of convents in Madrid. He had visited him later, while Orgaz was imprisoned for his participation in the rebellion against the Republican government organized by General Sanjurjo in 1932. Orgaz was now stationed in Burgos as the head of recruiting and instruction. Escrivá also had some contact with General Martin Moreno through one of his daughters. These contacts, and the facilities normally granted to priests in the Nationalist zone, enabled him to get the pass he needed. During January and February, he visited Valladolid, Avila, Bilbao, Leon, Zaragoza, and Pamplona.

The Sabadell Hotel

By March, the need for privacy was becoming pressing. More visitors were coming to see Escrivá, including people living in

Burgos and a growing stream of young officers on leave. In addition, the number of members of the Work in Burgos was increasing. First, Botella moved to Burgos. Escrivá suggested to General Orgaz that Botella, who was close to completing degrees in mathematics and architecture, might be a useful addition to his staff in Burgos. The general had him assigned to the code section he headed, and on January 23, 1938, Botella joined Escrivá and Albareda in the boardinghouse where they were staying.

Casciaro would not succeed in getting a transfer to Burgos until March. At first, he tried unsuccessfully to use family connections. When he fell ill in Pamplona, Escrivá went to visit him. As they were talking in Casciaro's room in a boardinghouse, a soldier came to tell him that all leaves had been cancelled and that he should report immediately to the barracks. Rumors spread through Pamplona that because of heavy Nationalist casualties at Teruel, troops assigned to garrisons in Pamplona would be sent immediately to the front. Escrivá was concerned, but, giving Casciaro his blessing, he assured him that he would pray to our Lady and that everything would turn out well. When the confinement to barracks ended around midnight and Casciaro returned to his room, he found Escrivá still waiting for him. "He received me," Casciaro recalls, "as a father receives a son who has just survived a great peril. His fatherly love, his heart of a father and mother, moved me. Together we said a Hail Holy Queen to our Lady in thanksgiving."

Escrivá returned to Burgos determined to do what he could to get Casciaro transferred there. When he learned of another opening on Orgaz's staff, he wrote the general outlining Casciaro's qualifications, and on March 8, 1938, Casciaro was transferred to Burgos and joined the others at the boardinghouse.

Renewed efforts to find a small house or apartment proved futile, so, at the end of March, they decided to rent a 300-square-foot room on the second floor of the Sabadell Hotel. To give the bare, unattractive room of this third-class hotel a more inviting and homelike atmosphere, they decorated the walls with maps of various regions of Spain and hung banners made out of scraps of felt with the words DYA and Rialp emblazoned on them.

Casciaro designed the banners in the style of the flags used by Spanish university sporting clubs, and some girls whom Escrivá had met through Rodríguez Casado's mother sewed them. Albareda obtained a crucifix and an icon of the Blessed Mother painted on wood from cousins who operated an art gallery. In 1948, the icon accompanied the first members of Opus Dei who came to the United States, and today it hangs in the living room of a center of Opus Dei in Chicago.

The main part of the room, which would be the base of Opus Dei's activities for the next nine months, measured about thirteen by fifteen feet. It had three creaky metal beds, where Albareda, Botella, and Casciaro slept, a small wardrobe, a diminutive table, and two chairs. Near the door was a windowless alcove that contained Escrivá's bed, a bedside table, and a wash basin with running water. This area was separated from the rest of the room by a thin, translucent white curtain. Overlooking the street was a small glassed-in balcony where Escrivá often talked with visitors. To obtain some privacy, he would close the shutters, plunging the room into darkness and forcing those in the main part to turn on the light even in the middle of the day. When that happened, Botella would jokingly whisper to Casciaro, "Good night."

Poverty and Penance

The cheerfulness Escrivá and the other members of the Work displayed, because of their deep faith in God's loving providence, disguised the months of suffering they all endured in Burgos. They were cut off from the members of their families. Escrivá had left his mother, sister, and brother in Madrid, and the other members of the group all had close relatives in difficult situations. In most cases, they had no way of knowing what was happening to their families.

The group was desperately short of money. Casciaro and Botella got their meals in the soldiers' mess, but they were paid only two pesetas a day at a time when dinner in a modest restaurant in Burgos cost at least eight pesetas, and the room they rented in the Sabadell Hotel cost sixteen pesetas a night for the four of

them. Albareda made a bit more, but he was far from well paid. Members of the Work in other parts of Spain and friends from DYA sent them what they could to help support the apostolate, but most of them could not contribute much.

Inspired by the advice of the Psalms to “cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you” (Ps 54: 22), Escrivá decided not to take any stipends for saying Mass or preaching. In a letter to the vicar general of the diocese of Madrid, he wrote: “I have seriously resolved not to accept any more Mass stipends, my only possible source of income at this moment. If this is madness, then so be it! But in this way, I can offer the Mass frequently for my bishop and my vicar general, for my beloved sons . . . and for myself, a sinful priest.”

The state of their wardrobe gives some idea of their financial condition. The army provided little or no clothing to soldiers, who had to fend for themselves. They had one woolen undershirt, which had been given to them by some nuns on their way through San Sebastian. It was very long and elaborately embroidered with the initials of its former owner. One day, wearing army pants and boots and with the undershirt hanging almost to his knees, Casciaro decided that he looked like a medieval soldier and began to ape Siegfried in Wagner’s Ring cycle, much to the amusement of Albareda and Botella. From then on they called the undershirt “Siegfried’s shirt.” They also gave names to each of the five pairs of pajamas they had among the four of them. They took turns changing as the spare pair was washed.

Escrivá had a clerical overcoat, one light-weight cassock given to him by Bishop Olaechea, and one of the bishop’s old black felt hats. Despite the bitter cold of winter, he refused to purchase a sweater or scarf or to replace the hat and cassock, both of which were badly worn. Eventually Botella and Casciaro cut the hat up into small pieces, which they sent to the other members of the Work and their friends as a reminder to pray for Escrivá. This left him no choice but to buy a new one.

Their efforts to force him to buy a new cassock were less successful. One day in August 1938, before going to the barracks, they tore his old cassock into pieces and threw it away. When they

returned, however, they found him bent over the cassock, patiently sewing it back together. The mending was so poor that, whenever he went out, he was forced to wear his overcoat to cover up the ragged cassock, even in the middle of summer. Nonetheless, a long time went by before they could convince him to have a new cassock made.

Despite their penury, they helped others. In his January 9, 1938, letter to members of the Work, Escrivá offered to send them money, books with which to study a foreign language, and crucifixes and any other religious goods they might need. The newsletter sent in March 1938 to former residents and students of DYA and other friends offered financial aid to those who needed it. "Don't hesitate to ask us for books, clothing, money. We'll gladly send them to you right away. Feel free to ask. Many of you are sending us money for our undertaking. We are truly glad to use your contributions to our meager common fund on behalf of those experiencing financial straits."

They also entertained visitors who came to Burgos. One morning after Mass, they took out for breakfast a young officer who was passing through Burgos. Afterward, Casciaro complained that the young man had gulped down several servings of hot chocolate and several plates of doughnuts. Escrivá laughingly excused him, saying that he just could not get his calculations right. He had finished one serving of doughnuts while he still had some hot chocolate left, and then the hot chocolate ran out while he still had some doughnuts left from the next serving.

As he had done in Madrid, Escrivá continued to practice a rigorous spirit of mortification and penance, over and above the discomforts and limitations imposed by poverty and by living crowded together in a small hotel room with three other people. Many nights he slept on the floor, using his breviary as a pillow. When Albareda was in town, he normally ate with him, while Botella and Casciaro ate in the mess, but on the frequent occasions when Albareda was out of town, he skipped meals altogether or ate only a tiny amount in an extremely cheap restaurant. He would often buy a few cents worth of peanuts so that when Casciaro asked him whether he had eaten he could answer yes. In

the evenings, he sometimes agreed to have a one-peseta omelet in the canteen of the railroad station, but at other times, when Casciaro and Botella tried to get him to go out for a bite to eat, he would decline, insisting that he was not hungry.

Many days, he even refrained from drinking water. Once, Casciaro, who thought he was overdoing his penance, handed him a glass of water and commanded him, "Drink it!" When Escrivá refused, saying that he was getting out of line, Casciaro responded that if he didn't drink the water, he would drop it. Seeing that Escrivá was not going to give in, he let the glass fall and shatter on the floor. Mimicking his tone of voice, Escrivá said patiently, "Temper!" A few hours later, when they were preparing to go to bed, he said affectionately, "Be careful not to walk around barefoot, there might be some splinters of glass on the floor."

Despite Escrivá's rebuffs, Casciaro and Botella persistently tried to try to force him to take better care of himself and to moderate his penance. Finally, at the end of April 1938, Escrivá wrote to Jiménez Vargas asking him to make them stop:

I am aware that these children have sent you a letter telling you about my plan of life. I want to tell you that they have the best intentions, but that they don't realize they are playing into the hands of the devil.

Owing to their intervention, sometimes a bit rough, even though well meant, instead of reasoning with them orally, I wrote them a sharp note. I believe they have written to both Ricardo and you.

I want to state clearly that, although I do not have a director in Burgos, I do not do anything that would directly endanger my health. However, I must not lose sight of the fact that we are not merely playing at doing something good. . . . Rather, to fulfill God's will, I have to be a saint whatever the cost, even if it were at the expense of my health, which it won't be.

I am so utterly convinced of this—I see it so clearly—that no human consideration can be allowed to prevent me from putting it into practice.

I am telling you this in all simplicity. I have my reasons. You have lived with me longer than anyone else and you surely understand that I need to be knocked into shape [through penance].

So please calm these children down and snap them out of it.

Escrivá encouraged the members of the Work and the other people to whom he gave spiritual direction to practice a spirit of penance and mortification, especially in the little things of everyday life. He did not suggest they undertake the rigorous fasts and other penances he practiced. On the contrary, he was concerned to see that they got enough to eat. In a letter to his sons in Burgos, written in August 1938, while he was staying briefly in Avila, he told Botella, "When you write back, let me know if you're having a snack every day. It's a shame that those jars of preserves are still in the cupboard! Have them buy you some small jars of marmalade. One of those jars with a roll could solve your 'problem of obedience' some afternoons." Turning to Casciaro, he added, "Take care of this please, and also buy him some cheese. You yourself are becoming skin and bones, but very elegantly. The two of you need to encourage each other not to skip the snack for even one day. Is that clear? I won't say anything to José María [Albareda] about this, because I don't think it is necessary. In this, he is not a three-year-old like the rest of you."

A Father to His Sons

Both the tone and the substance of the letter reflect Escrivá's affection for his sons in the Work, an affection that shows up constantly in his letters. During another trip he wrote: "Who can fathom the human heart? Would you believe that right up to the last moment I kept looking to see if you'd come before the train pulled out? Now I feel remorse for not having been more generous with my Lord Jesus. After all, I had told you not to come to say goodbye. After doing that, which being . . . bad was a good thing, there I was with desires to see you, and talk with you for a few minutes, and give you an embrace."

In June, Vallespín, who had been assigned to the Madrid front, was wounded when a defective hand grenade exploded accidentally. As soon as he received word, Escrivá took a train to Avila and, from there, made his way to the hospital near the front, where Vallespín was being treated for multiple lacerations. Shortly thereafter, Escrivá learned that Vallespín's father had died. In view of Vallespín's weakened condition, and because it would not be possible for him to attend the funeral or visit his family, Escrivá decided to delay letting him know. Several months later he received word that Vallespín had been notified—as it later turned out mistakenly—that several other members of his family had died.

He wrote:

May Jesus watch over you.

My dear Ricardo,

I have just hung up the telephone after trying in vain to speak with you. My first instinct was to go and see you on tomorrow's bus, but that isn't possible. So I decided to write you this letter.

We heard about your father's death (may he rest in peace) around the time you were wounded. Who was going to tell you about it at that moment? I limited myself to offering all the prayers and sacrifices I could for him and writing (twice) so that your family would be taken care of financially. Nothing more could be done.

I was unaware of the other deaths. I shall pray for them as well. Send me the information you have, and let me know who gave it to you. The only thing they said about your father was: "Ricardo's father died on April 15." Nothing more.

How I wish I could give you an embrace! I put myself by your side in desire to tell our Lord: "*Fiat . . .*" [Thy will be done].

Poor Josemaría would like to say, without tears, that now, if possible, he is your father more than ever.

A big embrace and God bless you.

God's Protection

In addition to bestowing his own affection upon his Opus Dei sons, Escrivá reminded them tirelessly of God's fatherly affection. Helped by Escrivá's vivid faith, the members of the Work saw God's loving care for them in everyday events. On at least one occasion, however, God's providence manifested itself in striking fashion. Toward the end of July 1938, Escrivá received disturbing news from a friend. A high-ranking treasury official, who was an old rival of Casciaro's father in provincial politics, was preparing to denounce Casciaro as a Communist who had crossed the lines as a spy and was now in a sensitive position in the code section of army headquarters. Casciaro went with Miguel Fisac, who was in Burgos at the time, to see if they could persuade the official's wife to convince her husband that his accusations were groundless. Their visit was unsuccessful.

On the morning of August 1, 1938, Escrivá went with Albareda to visit the official. When appeals to justice and compassion failed, Escrivá warned him of the spiritual harm he was inflicting upon himself and that he might have to account to God that very day for his deeds. Escrivá's warnings fell on deaf ears. Referring to Casciaro's father's prominent role in center-left provincial politics and supposed crimes during the war, the official repeated stubbornly, "Both father and son have to pay." Albareda and Escrivá left the office disheartened.

As he walked down the stairs, Escrivá muttered to himself, "Tomorrow or the next day, a funeral." A few hours later, walking through the streets of Burgos, Escrivá noticed a poster on a church wall announcing—as was the custom in Spain during that period—a funeral. The funeral was for the fifty-one-year-old official, who had been stricken by a sudden attack and had died in his office that morning, shortly after his meeting with Escrivá and Albareda.

When Casciaro returned to the hotel for lunch, Escrivá related, as gently as possible, what had happened. "He said," Casciaro recalls, "he thanked God for his obvious care for me and my father, although the event itself was painful. He also told me not to

worry about that man, because he was morally certain God had had mercy on him and had granted him final repentance. He said he had not ceased praying for him and his children from the moment he left his office." "From that day forward," Casciaro adds, "all my life I have prayed for his soul and for his whole family. . . . God will have rewarded him for all his good works and will no doubt have forgiven him for those moments of darkness so understandable in the chaotic climate of the war."

Lessons in Stone

Escrivá frequently took friends and former residents and students of DYA for long walks along the banks of the Arlazón River. In the course of their conversations, he advised them never to cease being men of God and to try to turn everything they did into God's work. To illustrate the point, he often took them to visit the towers of Burgos's Gothic cathedral. High above the street, where it could hardly be noticed, was a "veritable lacework of stone that must have been the result of very patient and laborious craftsmanship."

As they admired the beautifully executed ornamentation, Escrivá reminded his visitors that "none of the beauty of this work could be seen from below." He would say: "This is God's work, this is working for God! To finish your work perfectly, with all the beauty and exquisite refinement of this tracery stonework." He pointed out that "all we had seen was a prayer, a loving dialogue with God. Those who had spent their energies there were quite aware that no one at street level could appreciate their efforts. Their work was for God alone."

Adapting the lesson to the visitors' specific circumstance, he urged them to "make good use of their time by doing something worthwhile, and not to look upon the war as a sort of 'closed parenthesis' in their lives." He advised them "not to give in to laziness, but to do all they could to prevent their trenches and sentry posts from becoming like the waiting rooms of the period, where people killed time waiting for trains that never seemed to arrive."

By Train and Letter

Escrivá did not sit in Burgos waiting for people to visit. Frequently he traveled to see members of the Work and others whom he felt especially needed his help. Only a few weeks after reaching Burgos, he received word that Carlos Aresti, a former Ferraz resident, had been seriously wounded and was in a hospital in Bilbao. He arrived just in time to comfort him spiritually, remaining with him until his death.

In April, he went to Cordoba, in the far south of Spain, to visit a young member of the Work who had been out of touch since the outbreak of the civil war. When he went to buy a ticket for the return trip, the ticket clerk told him that only second-class tickets were currently available and that it was very unlikely that there would be any third-class tickets. But Escrivá didn't have enough money for second-class seating all the way back to Burgos. Unless he could buy a third-class ticket, he would be able to get only as far as Salamanca, about sixty miles short of Burgos. When he returned to the ticket window several hours later, after praying fervently to his guardian angel, the astonished ticket clerk told him that more than a dozen third-class tickets had become available. Thirty-six hours later he arrived back in Burgos, after spending two nights sitting up on the wooden benches of a packed, fetid third-class car, filled with the smoke and soot of the engine, which often came through the windows.

He set off on May 9, 1938, to visit Jiménez Vargas, who was stationed on the Teruel front. Although he left Burgos by train in the morning, he did not reach Zaragoza—which was about 150 miles away—until after midnight, and he was still about 100 miles away from Vargas. Five days would pass before he reached him. The trip back was equally slow and included several stops along the way to visit people. By the time he made it back to Burgos, it was May 25.

From Burgos, Escrivá and the other members of the Work corresponded with many people. In March 1938, they resumed publishing the elementary newsletter *Noticias* that they had sent out to the residents and friends of DYA during the summer before the

war. At first, the newsletters were reproduced in León by a priest friend who had access to a primitive duplicating machine. In October 1938, however, the machine broke down, and thereafter they had to generate the newsletter by repeatedly typing an original and two carbon copies on an old typewriter.

The bulk of each issue was made up of news of the whereabouts and activities of the friends from whom they had heard. Each issue also contained spiritual comments and encouragement. In the March issue, for instance, Escrivá wrote:

The red revolution hasn't interrupted our work. We continue working—as is both natural and supernatural—with the same effort as always. Ten years of work! In the eleventh, soon to begin, Jesus and I expect a great deal from you. Right now from your barracks, trenches, and ramparts, from your forced stay in hospitals, how much you can help our Work, with your prayers and clean living, your setbacks and successes! Let's live a special communion of the saints, and each of you, at the hour of interior struggle, just as at the hour of combat, will feel the joy and strength of not being alone.

During May, the month that the Church dedicates to the Blessed Virgin, he encouraged devotion to her:

This issue of *Noticias* is coming out well into May, Mary's month. You must be tired of hearing me say that crusades are never launched without first offering special prayers to our Lady. This month may be particularly hard for some of you: nights on the firing line in the trenches, long marches, weariness. . . . Whether or not you face such hardships, all of you will surely meet some difficulties. We'll offer all this as something that will please her even more than the flowers that always decorated the statue of the Blessed Mother in our oratory on Ferraz Street. *Spes Nostra, Sedes Sapientiae* [Our hope, Seat of wisdom]. May she watch over you.

In addition to sending out the newsletter every month, Escrivá, Casciaro, and Botella sent many personal letters to former resi-

dents and friends, especially those who found themselves in difficult situations. In June 1938, Escrivá wrote to Alejandro de la Sota, who had fallen sick:

I can't explain your silence. I suppose it's because you are still ill. But that's no excuse. Since you know how much we love you, you could unburden yourself in long letters, knowing you'd be understood. And we would write you long letters in return. So, Alejandro, I hope to hear from you soon! If you can't come here, just let me know if you want me to visit you, and I'll soon be there in that blessed land of Galicia. It's up to you. Remember the "principle" I explained to you fellows in Madrid, and put it into practice. Say it quietly: "Blessed be pain. Loved be pain. Sanctified be pain. Glorified be pain!"

From time to time, in letters to his sons in the Work, especially to those who had joined earlier, Escrivá opened his heart and let them see something of his own interior life of prayer. In a letter to Jiménez Vargas in the early days of June 1938, for instance, he wrote:

This morning on the way to Las Huelgas monastery to do my prayer, I discovered a new Mediterranean —the holy wound of our Lord's right hand. There I was all day long kissing and adoring it. How truly loveable is our God's sacred Humanity! Pray that he grant me his love to completely purify all my other affections. It's not enough to say, "Heart on the cross!" If one of Christ's wounds cleans, heals, soothes, strengthens, kindles, and enraptures, what wouldn't the five do as they lie open on the cross? Heart on the cross! O my Jesus, what more could I ask for? I realize that if I continue contemplating in this way (St. Joseph, my father and lord, is the one who led me there, after I asked him to enkindle me), I'll end up crazier than ever. Try it out yourself.

* * *

By late summer of 1938, the end of the war was still not in sight, although an eventual Nationalist victory seemed certain, absent major international intervention for the Republic. At this time, the group in Burgos grew, thanks to the arrival of del Portillo and other members of the Work who finally succeeded in escaping from Madrid and crossing the lines between the opposing armies. We turn now to their story.

In Madrid and Burgos

 OCTOBER 1937—MARCH 1939

When Escrivá left Madrid at the beginning of October 1937, he put Zorzano in charge of Opus Dei in Madrid and the rest of the Republican zone. Del Portillo, Barredo, and Alastrue remained virtual prisoners in the legation of Honduras, and Rodríguez Casado continued holed up in the Norwegian embassy.

Hernández de Garnica, who had been drafted into the Republican army shortly after he was released from jail in July 1937, was stationed far away in the province of Granada. Zorzano wrote to him regularly and urged the other members of the Work to do so; but at times, months went by without a reply. On the rare occasions when Hernández de Garnica came to Madrid, Zorzano went to great lengths to support him and to make sure that he had an opportunity to receive the sacraments. Years later, Hernández de Garnica recalled that Zorzano “faced the difficulties of the moment with such naturalness that at times I wondered if he was so foolhardy that he was unaware of the dangers surrounding us on all sides.”

Another source of concern was Rodríguez Casado, who was suffering from both hunger and emotional isolation in the Norwegian embassy. Zorzano tried repeatedly to arrange his transfer to the legation of Honduras, but without success. By June of 1938, Rodríguez Casado had lost sixty-five pounds. He was not permitted to receive visits. But once a week, when a friend was in charge of the door, Zorzano was able to spend an hour with him and bring him food.

Zorzano himself was reduced to skin and bones and so weak that he often had to stop to rest on a park bench during the short walk to the embassy. Rodríguez Casado protested that Zorzano should stop bringing him food and eat more himself, but Zorzano

gave no importance to his own weakness and insisted that he did not need the food he brought.

In addition to food, Zorzano brought Rodríguez Casado Holy Communion, spiritual encouragement, and news about the other members of the Work. A letter he wrote sums up part of the content of their conversations:

During this time, when Emmanuel [the term he used to refer to Jesus because of postal censorship] grants us the favor of allowing us to share his load, we have to take good advantage of the opportunity, considering that each passing moment has eternal repercussions. We have to carry the load generously — as Grandfather [the term he used for Escrivá] always tells us — with a joy and a peace that reflect the spirit that moves us and our special “family air.” In this way, although apparently our work can’t be seen, Emmanuel, who sees in secret, will value it more highly than if we were fighting on the front lines.

Crossing the Front Lines

Del Portillo, Barredo, and Alastrue were anxious to leave the legation of Honduras in an attempt to reach the Nationalist zone, where they could work with Escrivá and the others on rebuilding the apostolates of Opus Dei. Even before Escrivá’s group left Barcelona, they asked Isidoro to let them try to escape, but he felt the risk was too great. As the months dragged on, they repeatedly made their request, but each time Zorzano found some reason why they should stay in the legation. At times, he thought the Nationalists were on the verge of taking Madrid and ending the war. At other times, he thought he could arrange an escape through diplomatic channels. Although every plan eventually fizzled, he continued to advise patience.

By June 1938, del Portillo had little hope that Zorzano would ever change his mind, but he wrote to him once again asking permission to leave the legation, enlist in the Republican army, and try to cross the lines. A few days later, he received a note from

Zorzano: "With the help of Emmanuel, I have thought carefully about your proposal. . . . I think that you can do what you propose and that Emmanuel and Mary will fulfill your wishes, which we share."

Del Portillo was astounded:

A few days earlier, we had learned about the fate of the only person who had left the legation to try to cross the lines, a young philosophy student who belonged to the Congregation of the Sacred Heart. He had been shot in no-man's-land. A majority of those who tried to cross the lines failed in their attempt. But now, Isidoro was giving us permission. His faith in the human success of our effort was so great that, if you looked at things from a natural point of view, you couldn't help but wonder at the tranquility with which he was playing with the lives of various members of the Work.

At the time, Zorzano explained only that he had changed his mind after thinking about matters in the presence of God. On his deathbed, he revealed that praying before a small crucifix in his room, God had made him see not only that the attempt would succeed but that the crossing would take place on October 12, 1938, the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar. In Burgos, Escrivá simultaneously received the same assurance, which he shared with del Portillo's mother, who was living in Burgos.

At the time, neither del Portillo nor the others knew anything about these occurrences. They knew only that they had finally obtained permission to try to cross the lines. Alastrue left the legation on June 27, 1938, and presented himself in a recruiting center. To avoid problems from not having enlisted when his age group was summoned, he claimed to be twenty-eight years old, six years older than his actual age. Del Portillo and González Barredo left the legation and went to the recruiting center a few days later. Del Portillo enlisted under the name of his brother, who was seven years younger than he was. The recruiting officers were suspicious but eventually accepted his enlistment and told him to report four days later for induction. Because of his age,

González Barredo was immediately given a desk job in Madrid, and Zorzano decided it would be better for him to stay there and not attempt to cross into the Nationalist zone.

Del Portillo and González Barredo found temporary lodging in a boardinghouse. A friend took in Alastrue. In the afternoons, they gathered at Alastrue's room or at the boardinghouse to pray together. The three of them ate their meals at a barracks, where Zorzano and Escrivá's brother, Santiago, often joined them. Zorzano left a description of those meals: "After a long wait in line to get our food, we would look for a place to sit on the ground and some bricks to put our plates on. We didn't have enough silverware or better, spoons, since that was all there was—so we would wait for one person to finish so the next could use the spoon. We had a great time." He spoke of the feasts of our Lady, when "we celebrated in style. Following the Father's custom of giving something to the poor on her feasts, we gave the food we received to the poor."

When del Portillo arrived for duty on July 6, 1938, he realized the marked differences in appearance between himself at twenty-four and the seventeen-year-old recruits who were the age he had claimed to be when he enlisted under his brother's name. Rather than risking detection as an imposter, he returned to the recruiting office and enlisted under another name.

On July 21, Zorzano decided that Rodríguez Casado should join del Portillo and Alastrue in their attempt to cross the lines. The next day, Rodríguez Casado enlisted in the army. By the end of the month, the three had received their assignments, but the units to which they were assigned offered little possibility of being able to cross the lines.

In early August, they heard about a place in the province of Cuenca from which it would be relatively easy to cross over. Del Portillo's cousin was working there as an engineer and was good friends with the commander of the troops on that section of the front. Del Portillo and Alastrue decided to desert and reenlist in the hope that the cousin could have them assigned to a unit stationed in a favorable spot. Deserting was risky, but things in Madrid were so chaotic that there was a good chance they would

not be caught. Rodríguez Casado was pursuing another plan, using his father's connections.

All their plans came crashing down by mid-August. The commander of the Cuenca front had been reassigned, and Rodríguez Casado's efforts to obtain a new posting failed. At this point, they decided to let events take their course. Del Portillo wrote: "We have concluded that God wants us to place ourselves completely in his hands, trusting he will resolve the whole matter as seems best to him. We have looked for ways and places to cross over, but everything has come to a dead end. We have employed every human means. Since we are blind, all we can do now is wait until he provides his own means and leads us by the hand, wherever he wants. He knows best." The three deserted once more and reenlisted.

On August 24, 1938, del Portillo and Rodríguez Casado were ordered onto trucks and shipped out to an unknown destination, leaving Alastrue behind. After spending a few days in training near a tiny town in the province of Guadalajara, del Portillo was assigned to join a group of two hundred soldiers headed for another small town about fifteen miles closer to the front. Rodríguez Casado volunteered to join the group and was accepted. Both were appointed corporals in the same platoon and transferred to the town of Fontanar, about six miles outside of Guadalajara.

A month had gone since they had last seen Alastrue, and they had no news of his whereabouts. Then, unexpectedly, on September 19, 1938, he arrived as part of a detachment of soldiers that had come to complete the battalion. Initially he was assigned to a different company from the one in which del Portillo and Rodríguez Casado were serving, but a few days later, at his request, he was transferred to their company.

Del Portillo obtained a pass to spend October 2, 1938, the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei, in Madrid. He, Zorzano, González Barredo, and Santiago Escrivá waited in a long line at an army barracks for a little bread, some watery rice, and a sardine. They sat down on the sidewalk for their anniversary dinner. Afterward, Zorzano gave del Portillo some consecrated Hosts to take back with him to his army unit.

Del Portillo told Zorzano that within three or four days they expected to be sent to the front and that they planned to cross over as soon as possible. Zorzano responded that he had already written to Escrivá saying that they would arrive around October 12, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Del Portillo later commented:

Naturally I was more than a little surprised by his reply. Until I told him, he didn't even know that we would soon be going to the front. Furthermore, only God knew whether or not we would succeed in crossing no-man's-land. And even if we did, when would it happen? I thought all of this, but I didn't say anything. The ease with which he assured me that he had already written about this to the Father, and the security he exhibited, left me completely disconcerted.

On October 9, 1938, the battalion to which del Portillo, Rodríguez Casado, and Alastrue were assigned began a long march that brought it, early the next morning, to positions atop a hill near a village close to the front lines. Del Portillo learned from one of the officers of the unit they were replacing that Nationalist troops held the village of Majaelrayo, a few miles to the north.

The next day, del Portillo and Alastrue were ordered to get supplies from a nearby town that lay between their position and Majaelrayo. Rodríguez Casado received permission to go to the same town to buy medicine. At 6:00 the next morning, after receiving Holy Communion, the three of them set out in the midst of a rainstorm that grew heavier as the day progressed. During the day, they climbed several 5,000-foot mountains, avoiding main paths so as to remain out of sight.

After spending the night in a cave, they resumed their journey early on the morning of October 12, 1938, the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar. By 8:30 in the morning, they were high up in a pine forest looking down on a nearby town, trying to discern whether it was in the hands of the Republican or Nationalist army. Just then, they heard church bells beckoning the faithful to Mass, an unequivocal sign that the town lay in the Nationalist zone. They

walked openly down the road, taking no precautions. When they arrived in the town—which proved to be not Majaelrayo but Cantalojas—they learned that they had been spotted earlier. Thinking that they were advance units of a Republican attack, the commander of the Nationalist troops stationed in the town had given orders to open fire with a machine gun the moment they spread out or took other evasive action.

After attending Mass and getting something to eat, they called Rodríguez Casado's father, who was a colonel in the Nationalist army. Thanks to his influence, they were not detained in the camp for refugees and prisoners but allowed to continue on to Burgos. On the morning of the 12th, as Botella and Casciaro left for the office, Escrivá promised to "call you when they arrive." The 12th came and went without any news, but Escrivá remained "serene, sure, joyful. Every time the phone rang," Botella reports, "he thought it would be the news he was awaiting. The 13th was the same, with the Father festive and joking all day long. He told us to be on the alert. On the 14th, he said to me, 'I'll call you at the barracks when they arrive.'" At 8 P.M. he called to say that they had arrived.

Brief Reunion in Burgos

Although there is no account of the first meeting of del Portillo, Rodríguez Casado, and Alastrue with the members of the Work in Burgos, it must have been emotional. Casciaro and Botella had not seen the three recent arrivals for two and a half years, and Escrivá had last seen them more than a year ago.

They were not destined to remain together in Burgos for long. Even before the three recent refugees arrived, Albareda had moved to Vitoria, where he had obtained a job as a high school teacher. A few days after arriving in Burgos, del Portillo was assigned to the Academy of Army Engineering Officers. It was only a few miles from Burgos, but he was required to live on the base. In November, Rodríguez Casado was assigned to the Academy of Army Engineer Sergeants in Zaragoza. At the beginning of December, Casciaro was posted to army headquarters in Calatyud,

about one hundred miles southeast of Burgos. After completing his course, del Portillo was sent to the small town of Cigales, near Valladolid, where Rodríguez Casado had also been assigned after finishing his initial training course.

By mid-December, only Escrivá and Botella remained in Burgos. They would have liked to rent a small apartment, but that remained out of the question. They were anxious to leave the Sabadell Hotel, where they could not afford to pay for the four beds in the room and were, therefore, forced to share their space with strangers assigned to the room by the desk clerk. One day, Escrivá wrote in his diary: "This can't go on. We can't work, carry on correspondence, have visitors, or leave our papers around. And not a minute of blessed solitude, so necessary for maintaining interior life. Beside all this, new people every day. Impossible! I asked our Lord for a solution at Mass."

Shortly before Christmas, they found a room in a boarding-house, where they would remain until the end of the war. The building had no heat, and the furniture was mostly makeshift, including a chest mounted on columns of empty spools of thread glued together. But the cost was only five pesetas a day for the two of them, and at least they would have some privacy.

Del Portillo

Like the other members of the Work scattered around the Nationalist zone of Spain, del Portillo tried to bring his fellow soldiers closer to Christ through his words and deeds. As soon as he reached the Academy, he asked the colonel in charge for permission to attend Mass each morning at a nearby monastery, promising to be back before reveille. The colonel granted his permission, but he told him that if the Military Police or anyone else stopped him, "I don't know anything about it." Naturally others in the barracks noticed del Portillo getting up early and asked him what he was doing. By the time their training course ended, thirty officers had begun going to daily Mass.

By the beginning of 1939, Escrivá had begun to rely particularly on del Portillo, who would become his closest cooperator and

his first successor as the head of Opus Dei. On February 10, 1939, Escrivá went to see him and Rodríguez Casado. While there, he gave them a meditation on the text of the Gospel in which Jesus gives Simon the new name Peter. Escrivá's outline of the meditation reads: "*Tu es Petrus* [You are Peter], *saxum* [rock], you are stone, a rock! You are because God wants you to be. Despite the enemies that surround us, . . . despite yourself . . . despite me, and despite everyone who might oppose us. Rock, foundation, support, fortitude . . . paternity." Although the meditation was intended for both of them, the "rock" upon which Escrivá could rely referred especially to del Portillo. Writing to him a few weeks later, Escrivá repeated the metaphor. "May Jesus watch over you for me, *Saxum* [rock]. That is what you are. I see that our Lord lends you fortitude and makes a reality of my word, *Saxum*. Thank him for it and be faithful to him despite . . . so many things."

The Final Months in Burgos

By the fall of 1938, a total Nationalist victory in the near future seemed increasingly likely. In April 1938, Franco's forces had cut the Republican zone in two, separating Catalonia from Madrid and Valencia. Only massive intervention by foreign powers in favor of the Republic could prevent the Nationalists from occupying Madrid, thereby winning the war. It had never been likely that the Western democracies would decisively intervene in Spain, and their acquiescence to the German occupation of the Sudetenland at Munich in September 1938 demonstrated their lack of resolve for the action required to save the Republic.

Escrivá was frequently out of town during the final months of the war, visiting members of the Work and other young men with whom he had been in contact in Madrid. When he was in Burgos, he often walked to the nearby monastery of Las Huelgas to research his doctoral dissertation in law, since he assumed that the material he had accumulated in Madrid before the outbreak of the war had all been lost. He also worked on expanding the book of points for meditation that he had published in 1934 under the title *Spiritual Considerations*. The new version would bear the title

The Way and would be published shortly after the end of the civil war in September 1939.

Escrivá frequently wrote to the members and friends of the Work about the growth of the apostolate that the next year would bring, if they were faithful to what God was asking of them. On December 10, 1938, he wrote, "If we all joyfully carry out our duty, there are only reasons for optimism, looking at things with complete objectivity." A few days later, he said, "Prayer! Don't give it up for any reason. We have no other weapon." In a letter to Vallespín written the day before Christmas, he opened his heart: "Today I am writing to the whole family. Just a few letters, since we are still only a few. It grieves me to think this is my own fault. What good example I wish to give always! Help me to ask our Lord's forgiveness for all my bad example up to now." The day before he had written to Vallespín:

I expect quite soon major changes that will expedite our family's undertaking. These I expect solely from God's goodness, since each day I see myself as more wretched.

I had a hard time of it today. But now I'm optimistic, serene, full of confidence. How good he is! These days join me in asking for perseverance, joy, peace, hunger for souls, unity . . . for everyone.

Oh, Ricardo, if only you and I—especially I—were to give him everything he asks for, how well everything would go! Prayer, prayer, prayer—this is the best artillery. And love for suffering. What's there to be afraid of? *Omnia vestra*: everything will be ours.

Preparations for the Return to Madrid

As the war drew to a close, the members of the Work intensified their preparation for returning to Madrid. The first order of business was to obtain the things they would need for an oratory. They had ordered a chalice and a tabernacle almost as soon as they got to Burgos. Escrivá now enlisted the help of several young women to make vestments. Suitable cloth was hard to find, so he

gladly accepted a gift of a silk bedspread that could be transformed into a chasuble.

Another priority was collecting books to stock the library of the residence they hoped to reestablish in Madrid and for the centers they envisioned in other cities. With Albareda's help, Escrivá had arranged for a number of well-known academics to sign a letter requesting books from Spanish and foreign organizations. In a letter written in June 1938, he had rejoiced that "books are beginning to come in across the border for our library." The following month he wrote, "Books keep arriving. Hopefully, if we behave, this business will be successful, like so many others we have undertaken with our sights set on God."

Despite his enthusiasm, however, much remained to be done as the end of the war approached. A point in *The Way* reflects the meager results obtained:

Books. I put out my hand, like one of Christ's beggars, and I asked for books. Books that are nourishment for the Catholic, apostolic, and Roman minds of many young students.

I put out my hand, like one of Christ's beggars, and each time had it brushed heedlessly aside! Why, Jesus, can people not understand the profound Christian charity of these alms, more effective than a gift of the finest bread.

Books and items for the oratory were the least of their problems. The house at Ferraz 16, which they had purchased for the residence just before the outbreak of the war, had suffered heavy damage. Escrivá observed its condition through army field binoculars while visiting Vallespín in a hospital on the Madrid front in July 1938. Money would be needed for major repairs or, in the worst case, to replace the residence. At a time when Escrivá and Botella could not afford to continue paying twenty pesetas a day for a room in the Sabadell Hotel, the estimated cost of one million pesetas to reestablish the Work's activities in Madrid was overwhelming.

In addition to praying ardently for the needed funds, Escrivá and the others approached relatives, friends, and acquaintances to

request their help. Don Emiliano, the father of one of the boys who had come to DYA, suggested that a wealthy friend of his, Don Pedro, might make a substantial contribution. Escrivá responded:

I hope that he will! It would be a great joy if he were to crown his life of hidden charity so magnificently. Believe me, I see no objective human solution for the financial straits we will soon be in, but I am serene. We are working for him and in his affairs. We have given him our possessions, few or many, our intellectual activity, which is the greatest gift a man has, our heart, . . . even our good name! So I think we can confidently trust that the million pesetas we need will come when needed, perhaps soon. Don Pedro? He could be the one. Let us ask our Lord. I will be very glad for Don Pedro's sake if he does it.

Nothing came of this appeal; however, Escrivá continued to be optimistic.

A year after arriving in Burgos, he sent a long letter to all the members of the Work summing up the experience of the past year and looking forward to the future. He stressed three themes: optimism; reliance on prayer, sacrifice, and interior life; and unity among the members of the Work. At the beginning of the letter, he said:

I would like to sum up in one word the conclusions of my own thoughts, after carefully considering matters in God's presence. The word that should characterize your efforts to rebuild the ordinary activities of our apostolate is *optimism*.

It is true that the communist revolution destroyed our home and scattered to the winds the things we had gathered with so much effort. It is also true that during these war years our supernatural undertaking has apparently suffered a sort of paralysis, and that the war has brought with it the loss of some of your brothers. . . .

This Work of God moves and is alive, active and fruitful, like the winter wheat that was sown and germinates beneath the frozen ground. . . .

Foreseeing that the war was drawing to a close, he described "the immediate task" as reopening the residence/academy in Madrid and then "the world!" The means would be "interior life: him and us."

We will have the necessary means and there will be no obstacles if each one really, efficaciously, and operatively offers himself to God in the Work. We offer ourselves to him when we live the Norms; when we cultivate a hardy piety and daily mortification and penance; when we try not to lose the habit of professional work and study; when we hunger to know more deeply the spirit of our apostolate; when discretion, which is neither mysterious nor secretive, accompanies our work . . . and above all, when we continually feel united by a special communion of the saints to all those who form part of our supernatural family.

On March 26, 1939, the Nationalist troops began their final assault on Madrid. It met no significant resistance. Escrivá had obtained a pass to enter Madrid from a friend who was under-secretary of the interior. On March 28, 1939, he somehow managed to find a place on one of the first trucks that entered the capital with supplies for the civilian population. A few days later, the war officially ended, and Opus Dei entered a new period of its history.

* * *

The years of the civil war were a painful trial. Ten years after its foundation, Opus Dei had no center and virtually no resources. Two of its members had died in combat. Three other young men, who perhaps had not fully grasped their vocation to Opus Dei before the fighting began, did not persevere through the prolonged period of tension and isolation. None of the young women who belonged to Opus Dei at the beginning of the war, but who were completely isolated during the entire war, was able to continue in the Work. Albareda was the only man and Fisac the only

woman to join Opus Dei during the almost three years of the war. When peace finally returned to Spain, only fifteen men and one woman belonged to Opus Dei. Among them, however, were solid, tested people who possessed a deep interior life of prayer and sacrifice and were firmly committed to living their vocation.

Before describing their efforts to carry out Opus Dei in the years immediately following the war, we will examine the social, economic, and political features of the world in which they worked.

Spain in a Europe at War

1939–1945

Within six months of the end of the civil war, most of the members of Opus Dei had been demobilized and had returned to their studies or professional work. The termination of religious persecution and of restrictions on religious practice made possible the resumption of the Work's formative activities in Madrid and opened up horizons in other parts of Spain. Opus Dei did not, however, find itself in a tranquil environment that favored its growth. The cessation of hostilities was far from bringing a return to normalcy. Spain continued to face great internal difficulties exacerbated by the outbreak of World War II.

Spain and World War II

Franco, like many of his contemporaries in Europe, was convinced that the age of the democracies had passed and that the future of Europe lay with nationalistic authoritarian regimes like those of Germany and Italy. As early as March 1937, he had entered a secret pact with Berlin that called for mutual consultation on issues of common interest and benevolent neutrality in the event of war, although this had not prevented him from assuring Paris and London during the Munich crisis in the fall of 1938 that Spain would remain neutral in the event of a general European conflict. A few days before the end of the civil war, Spain formally joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, demonstrating openly its ideological sympathy with the other authoritarian regimes. Simultaneously, it signed a new treaty of friendship with Berlin. Like its secret predecessor, the new treaty required mutual consultation.

The signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact in August 1939 came as a

disagreeable surprise to Franco, who was bitterly anti-Communist. On September 3, 1939, when Britain and France declared war on Germany in response to Germany's invasion of Poland, he issued a public call to all parties to return to negotiations, and he later condemned the destruction of Catholic Poland. During the months of the "phony war," when France and Britain were officially at war with Germany but no significant fighting took place, Spain signed trade agreements with Britain, France, and Portugal but refused a French request for a pledge of continued neutrality if Italy should enter the war.

Germany's rapid conquest of France in the spring of 1940 convinced Franco that Germany would win the war and dominate Europe. On June 12, 1940, he announced a new policy: non-belligerence. This meant that Spain was not neutral but supported the Axis powers, although it was not a belligerent.

Franco appears to have considered nonbelligerence a first step toward entering the war on the side of Germany and Italy, but he hoped to extract a high price for joining them. He presented to Berlin Spain's claims on French territories in northwest Africa, as well as an impressive list of food, fuel, ammunition, and other materiel Spain would need to enter the war. Hitler, flush with success in France, at first saw no need even to discuss the Spanish demands.

Franco and his advisors were disappointed by Berlin's failure to take their demands seriously and by its apparent lack of appreciation for what Spain could do for the Axis by facilitating the conquest of Gibraltar. They found themselves in a difficult situation. They were convinced that Germany would prove victorious and were anxious not to miss the opportunity to claim some of the spoils of war. At the same time, they were deeply concerned about the devastating effects a British naval blockade would have on Spain.

At a meeting with Hitler at the border town of Hendaye on October 20, 1940, Franco again presented his list of colonial, economic, and military demands. Hitler was unwilling to meet them, in large part because granting Franco's demands would have alienated Vichy France, which was more important to him than

Spain. The meeting ended with a toothless agreement pledging Spain to enter the war against Britain at some unspecified date to be determined by the Spanish government.

British success in the battle of Britain somewhat cooled Spanish interest in joining the war promptly; and during the rest of 1940 and early 1941, Franco resisted Berlin's pressure with delaying tactics and long lists of items Spain would need to intervene effectively in the war. Even at this time, Franco's posture was probably due more to overestimating what he could obtain in return than to a desire to stay out of the conflict. As 1941 wore on, Hitler gradually lost interest in Spain and Gibraltar and turned his attention to preparing for the invasion of the Soviet Union.

The attack Germany launched on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, made Franco more wary about entering the war, for he knew that the Soviet Union was a formidable opponent. On the other hand, many Falangists were enthusiastic about joining the struggle against Communist Russia. With the blessing of the government, the Falange soon began to organize a division of Falangist volunteers to fight in Russia. The 19,000-man "Blue Division" entered into combat on October 4, 1941, on the Leningrad front. During summer 1941, Spain also signed an agreement with Germany promising to provide 100,000 civilians to work in German factories. In fact, no more than about 15,000 ever went to Germany.

The entry of the United States into the war against the Axis powers, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, did not entirely undermine Franco's belief that Germany would eventually win the war. It did, however, make a German victory seem more difficult and more distant. Coupled with the stalemate of the German offensive against Moscow, it counseled greater prudence; and shortly thereafter, Franco suspended the right of German submarines to refuel in Spanish ports. Spain, however, remained nonbelligerent rather than neutral.

Franco's slightly greater restraint in his support of the Axis powers did not find much echo in the tightly controlled Spanish press, which continued to show strong Axis sympathies. By 1942, Germany's embassy in Madrid was its largest anywhere, and it carried out a massive pro-Axis propaganda campaign. In addition, the

Nazi party maintained an active propaganda apparatus in Spain, working in close contact with the Falange.

The Allied landing in North Africa in November 1942 provoked Germany's occupation of the southern half of France, which until then had been controlled by the pro-Nazi Vichy government. These developments brought the war much closer to Spain. German troops now stood on its northern border, and only a few miles of ocean separated its southern border from the Allied troops in North Africa. Both the United States and Britain hastened to assure Franco that he had nothing to fear from the Allies. Reports that Germany was considering asking permission to send troops through Spain to attack Gibraltar moved Franco to order a partial mobilization of the army, a gesture designed to dissuade Hitler from trying to capture Gibraltar. Nonetheless, at the same time, Franco expedited shipments of strategic raw materials to Germany. As 1942 drew to a close, Franco engaged in his last openly pro-Axis public remarks, announcing that "the liberal world is going under, victim of the cancer of its errors."

In early 1943, Franco began to formulate Spain's position as neutral in the European war between the Axis powers and the Allies, pro-Axis in the Axis war with the Soviet Union, and pro-Allies in the war in the Far East. In the later phases of the war, as it became clear that Germany would eventually be defeated, Franco gradually backed away from his pro-German stand. In 1944, he eventually declared once again that Spain was not merely nonbelligerent but neutral.

Franco's overestimate of what he could obtain from Hitler as the price of Spain's entry into World War II, combined with his innate caution, had the effect of saving Spain the horrors of participation in the conflict. This meant that Opus Dei could develop in a relatively peaceful climate and that its members were not once again called up for military service and dispersed. On the other hand, Franco's pro-Axis leanings and his underestimation of the power of the democracies caused him to preserve Spain's non-belligerent policy too long and to revert to a neutral position when it was already too late to ingratiate himself with the soon-to-be victorious Allies. This meant that after the end of the war, Spain

would undergo prolonged economic privation because of the hostility of the triumphant democracies to his regime.

The Political Climate

In the years immediately following the end of the civil war, the Spanish state did not have the degree of totalitarian control of life that existed in the Soviet Union and Germany or even in fascist Italy. Nonetheless, the Franco regime was more openly a personal dictatorship than that of the other totalitarian countries of Europe. Franco governed largely through decree — laws issued without even bothering to consult his cabinet.

The personal character of Franco's rule was reflected in the extraordinary degree of public adulation directed toward him. The massive military parade organized in Madrid on May 19, 1939, to celebrate the Nationalist victory was a personal apotheosis for the *Caudillo*. He was regularly greeted at public appearances by ritualistic chants of "Franco, Franco, Franco," inspired by Italian fascist invocations of the *Duce*. His name was painted on the walls of buildings throughout Spain and his image inscribed on postage stamps and coins.

Franco's regime was highly centralized and permitted little or no autonomy to the outlying provinces and regions. The two regions with the most marked identity, the Basque country and Catalonia, had both supported the Republic. They paid dearly for this. In addition to losing their political prerogatives and administrative autonomy, they suffered the suppression of their regional languages and all other manifestations of their distinctive cultures. In Barcelona, for several years after the end of the civil war, billboards admonished residents to "Speak the Language of the Empire," Castilian Spanish.

The repressive measures directed against Basque and Catalan nationalists were part of a larger picture of political repression. At the end of the war, the population of the Republican zone was exhausted by privation and shocked by defeat. Many were anxious for reconciliation. Franco, however, made no effort to reach out to his former enemies or to heal the country's divisions.

Martial law remained in effect until 1948. A law of political responsibilities was promulgated in February 1939. Under that law, all former members of revolutionary and left-liberal parties were subject to jail sentences ranging from six months to fifteen years. Purely political crimes were not subject to the death penalty, but "political crimes of violence" were. In 1940, the law of political responsibilities was supplemented by the new law for the suppression of Masonry and Communism.

According to a careful estimate, approximately 28,000 people were executed during the six years following the end of the war. The prison population of Spain grew from 100,000 at the end of the war to 270,000 at the beginning of 1940. At end of 1940, there were still more than 230,000 inmates in Spanish prisons. A series of amnesties reduced the number to 160,000 by the end of 1941 and to 74,000 by the end of 1943. The atmosphere of the country was harshly repressive by liberal democratic standards, although the repression was mild by the standards of the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany.

The various governments Franco named in the years immediately following the war were frequently referred to as Falangist, but in fact, as Professor Payne and others have pointed out, they represented a balance among the various groups that supported his regime: the army, the Falange, the Carlists, other monarchists, and Catholic groups, including Catholic Action and the ACNP. To the extent that there was a single dominant group, it was the army, rather than the Falange.

This is not to deny that the Falange exerted great influence on Spanish life in the years following the end of the civil war. By 1939, it counted 650,000 male members. By 1942, that number had grown to more than 900,000, although many of the members were merely nominal. It was the only political organization permitted in the country, and its syndicates were the only legal labor movement. It also controlled the only student organizations tolerated by the regime.

The Falange provided the symbols (blue shirts, arm-raised fascist salutes, etc.) and the ideological trappings of the regime. Its presence was felt especially in the press, where its "Movement

Publications" was the largest consortium of newspapers and magazines. Falangist publications, which were freed from official state censorship in May 1941, continually exalted the *Caudillo*, whom they presented as an exceptional and providential man. They regularly trumpeted the successes of the Axis armies, attacked the decadence of the democracies, and extolled the virtues of a militaristic, folkloric Spain. All in all, the Falange contributed powerfully to the fascist tone of life in post-civil-war Spain.

The Religious Climate

The collapse of the Republic brought with it the possibility of reopening churches and reestablishing religious worship in Madrid and the other areas of the country where it had been prohibited. Catholics throughout Spain responded with an outpouring of processions and other public religious ceremonies, which had been banned since the early days of the Republic. On March 1, 1940, an estimated 300,000 people attended special services organized at the Shrine of Jesus the Nazarene in Madrid. A few weeks later, throngs lined the streets of Madrid for a Good Friday procession.

On many occasions, public religious celebrations took on strong nationalist overtones. According to a Catholic newspaper, at the Corpus Christi procession in Madrid in June 1939, marchers and spectators alternated religious and Falangist hymns and gave *vivas* to "Christ the King, the Spanish army, and its invincible *Caudillo*." Conversely, civic celebrations often took on a religious tone with the prominent participation of priests and bishops. The external mixing of religion and politics manifested a widespread tendency of Spanish Catholics to identify religion with Spanish nationalism, to reject both secularism and liberalism, and to celebrate Franco as the savior of both Spain and the Church.

The Church received from the Franco regime substantial concessions in the areas of education and public morality. Religious orders dominated secondary education. As late as 1950, there were approximately 625 high schools run by religious orders and only 125 public ones. The public schools differed little from those

of the orders as far as their Catholic character went. Crucifixes were present in all classrooms, the school day began and ended with prayer, students attended religious services en masse, and official textbooks presented Catholicism as the soul of Spanish culture. In the area of public morality, official censors of newspapers, magazines, books, and films watched not only for criticism of the regime but for anything contrary to Catholic morals or teaching.

In other areas of life, the regime was far less favorable to the Church. It prohibited the organization of Catholic labor, agricultural, and student organizations. The formation of a Catholic political party like the CEDA, which had flourished under the Republic, was completely out of the question in Franco's one-party state. Franco expected the Church to confine itself to the sanctuary and the classroom and to forgo an institutional presence in large areas of life where it had played a role for almost a century.

Some members of the clergy were concerned not only about this marginalization of the Church but also about the regime's pro-Axis policy. They were pleased by its anti-Communism, but feared that a pro-Axis stance might presage a move toward a system based on Nazi theories of race and of absolute state superiority over Church, family, and education. Occasionally, members of the hierarchy spoke out against Nazism. In 1940, Cardinal Segura published a thinly veiled criticism of Spain's policy of cultural interchanges with Nazi Germany. In 1941, the bishop of Calahorra issued a pastoral letter denouncing Nazism. In 1942, the papal nuncio urged the hierarchy to speak out against Nazi racist and antireligious theories. In 1943, the official Catholic publication *Ecclesia* published the text of a statement in which Cardinal Van Roey of Belgium denied that Nazi Germany was fighting for the cause of Christianity, a claim often made in the Spanish press.

These public statements against Nazism were, nonetheless, isolated incidents. Although some members of the hierarchy and some clergy were disturbed by the racist and totalitarian aspects of National Socialism and by the totalitarian aspirations of the Falange, they rarely spoke openly against them. Nor did their rare

public criticism of Nazism represent opposition to Franco, much less support of liberalism or democracy. After the experience of the civil war, it is hardly surprising that most bishops were bitterly opposed to Communism, with which the Western democracies were allied, and grateful to Franco for his part in putting an end to a period of brutal religious persecution.

The Economy

Although disruption to the economy had been serious, the civil war had not been anywhere near as physically destructive as World War II would prove to be. There had been little heavy bombing of cities, and most of the country's industrial facilities were left intact. Nonetheless, industrial production in 1939 was down by almost a third from its prewar levels, and agricultural production had declined by twenty percent. Per capita income in 1939 was almost twenty-five percent below its already low 1935 level and would not exceed ninety percent of the 1935 level until after the end of World War II. The most heavily damaged sector of the economy was transportation: a third of the country's ships were lost, and half its railway locomotives destroyed.

Resources available for recovery were small. Spain had little domestic capital; its tax system was inefficient; and its trade had been disrupted by the civil war and would be further dislocated by World War II. Foreign trade in the early 1940s was less than half what it had been in 1935. These difficulties were exacerbated by a policy of economic autarchy and by severe droughts, which greatly hampered agricultural production. As a result, the years following the civil war were marked by severe food shortages and hunger. The food available under the official rationing system was totally inadequate (about 1,000 calories a day), and black markets flourished.

These problems were compounded by severe inflation. The cost of living was about two and a half times as high in 1940 as in 1936. By 1941, it was at three times its 1936 level. Spaniards who lived through World War II would recall that period as "the years of hunger."

* * *

Opus Dei resumed its activities in Madrid at the end of the civil war against a background that was far from uniformly favorable. The international situation prohibited expansion to other countries and created a climate of tension and uncertainty that prevented many people from concentrating on other things. The economic crisis facing the country greatly complicated the opening and operation of university residences and other types of apostolic activities. The religious fervor of the postwar period and the spirit of self-sacrifice many had developed during the war may have favored, in some ways, Opus Dei's expansion. In many cases, however, the prevailing emphasis on showy external manifestations of piety and the close link between religion and nationalistic fervor made it difficult for young men and women to understand Opus Dei's emphasis on an inner life of personal piety and on imitation of Christ's unspectacular, not to say hidden, work during his long years in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. Finally, the tendency to identify Catholicism and support of the Franco regime clashed with Opus Dei's stress on the political freedom of all Catholics and contributed significantly to the misunderstanding Opus Dei would face in the immediate post-war years.

Rebuilding and Expansion in Madrid

1939–1940

In St. Elizabeth's Rectory

Escrivá, del Portillo, Zorzano, Fernández Vallespín, and González Barredo went on March 29, 1939, to the building on Ferraz Street to which the DYA residence had moved just before the outbreak of the war. Although they knew it had sustained heavy damage, they hoped it could still serve as a base for rebuilding Opus Dei's apostolic activities. Finding it reduced to useless ruins was devastating.

To revive their spirits, they had immediate recourse to prayer. Among the ruins, Escrivá led a meditation based on the letter he had sent to the members of the Work on January 9, 1939. The theme was optimism founded on confidence in God: "We will have the necessary means, and there will be no obstacles, if each one really, efficaciously, and operatively offers himself to God in the Work."

A few days later, on a return visit to Ferraz Street, Escrivá found intact the framed text of Christ's new commandment of love, which had hung on the wall of DYA's study room. He took it as a message from God that although Opus Dei had no place of its own where its members could live and carry out their activities, it had something much more important in the spirit of sonship and brotherhood that united them.

For the moment, Opus Dei would have to operate out of the rectory of St. Elizabeth's. It had been used during the war as the offices of a union or revolutionary committee. All the locks were broken, and the rooms were filthy and strewn with litter, but after a massive cleanup the space was useable.

Escrivá had been considering asking his mother and sister to take charge of the housekeeping in Opus Dei's centers. He was reluctant to ask them to give up their privacy and take on this task, but he could see no other way of achieving the warm, homelike atmosphere he was convinced God wanted Opus Dei's centers to have. A few days after the *paella* that González Barredo had fixed for dinner came out a brick-like lump of rice, Escrivá decided to ask his family to move to the rectory.

As soon as they moved in, they set to work turning the rectory into a home. The furnishings consisted in large part of surplus cots and old army blankets, but the atmosphere soon became warm and inviting, above all because of the charity of the people who lived there, but also in large part because of the efforts of Escrivá's mother and sister to make it a home.

The months spent in St. Elizabeth's were crucial for the formation of the members of the Work who were in Madrid or who could get there frequently, even though they lived elsewhere. Botella, who was stationed in Burgos but often traveled to Madrid on the weekends, wrote: "We experienced the ways and warmth of the grandparents' home [a term the members of Opus Dei, who referred to Escrivá as the Father, often used to refer to his parents]. . . . There arose spontaneously a lifestyle that was an echo of the family tone the Father had experienced in his own home. . . . Many facets of our family life took root during those unforgettable months at St. Elizabeth's."

A New Residence in Madrid

The members of the Work gradually reestablished contact with their friends who had spent the civil war in the Republican zone completely out of contact with Opus Dei. In May, Escrivá sent a brief letter to all the young men whose addresses he had, urging them to do apostolate and to resume as soon as possible their studies, "Return to your books. Jesus Christ awaits you there," he told them.

During the spring and early summer of 1939, the members of the Work in Madrid searched for a suitable new home for the

DYA Residence. They prayed for this intention and asked others to do so. In the June issue of the bulletin sent to friends and former residents, Escrivá wrote: "Soon we'll have a house if you 'push' with your prayer and your sacrifices and your desire to study hard. Meanwhile, don't lose your blessed spirit of fraternity. Live it each day better, and show it by your collaboration in this mutual effort to remake our home."

In early July, they found three apartments at 6 Jenner Street, close to Madrid's main boulevard, the Paseo de la Castellana. Two apartments on the third floor would house the oratory, living room, library, and residents' bedrooms. An apartment on the first floor would house the kitchen and dining room, plus a room for Escrivá, one for his brother, Santiago, and one for his mother and his sister Carmen. The new residence took its name from its location—Jenner.

Casciaro combed flea markets and used furniture dealers for furniture. With good taste and a lot of work refinishing and adapting items to new uses, he managed to give the three apartments an inviting air on an extremely limited budget. The entrance hall was decorated with a large world map with an inscription taken from the prophet Malachi—"From the rising of the sun to its setting"—to remind those who saw it that people the world over were awaiting an encounter with Christ in the daily events of ordinary life. In another room, a banner depicting a walled city carried a phrase from the Book of Proverbs as a call to Christian brotherhood: "A brother helped by his brother is like a strong city."

The best room became the oratory. Despite their determination to give Christ in the Eucharist the best they could, their poverty severely limited what could be done. The tabernacle, although gilded and lined with gold cloth, was only wooden. The altar was also wooden, with a frontal cloth in the liturgical color of the day. The walls were covered with pleated burlap kept in place by a wooden baseboard and a walnut-stained frieze near the ceiling.

Taste and care made up for the poor quality of the materials, and the oratory was conducive to prayer. Everything focused attention on Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. Inscribed

inside the tabernacle doors were two phrases from the Eucharistic hymn *Lauda Sion*: “*Ecce Panis Angelorum*” (Behold the Bread of Angels) and “*Vere Panis Filiorum*” (Truly the Children’s Bread). On the frieze over the altar were the words of the hymn *Ubi Caritas*: “*Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*” (The Love of Christ has drawn us together in a single body). On the side walls, the frieze was decorated with a quotation from the Acts of the Apostles: “*Erant autem perseverantes in doctrina apostolorum, in communicatione fractionis panis et orationibus*” (And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers). The spaces between the words were filled with crosses and other traditional Christian symbols, including a loaf of bread, a sprig of wheat, a bunch of grapes, a lamp, and a dove.

The oratory rapidly became the center of the residence. As Escrivá wrote in a letter in July 1939, the residence was “a place of recollection and work, a fellowship that stimulates and betters everyone’s work,” but “above all else” it was “life next to the Life.”

Members of the Work in the Residence

The residence opened at the beginning of the school year in September 1939 and soon was full to capacity with some twenty residents. Among them were most of the members of Opus Dei living in Madrid—which is to say most of its members at that time. They represented a wide range of professions: Zorzano, del Portillo, and Hernández Garnica were engineers. Jiménez Vargas was a physician; González Barredo, a physicist; Albareda, a soil scientist; Fernández Vallespín, an architect; Botella and Casciaro, mathematicians and architects; and Rodríguez Casado, a historian.

In the course of the 1939–1940 school year, a number of young men who had joined Opus Dei after the war’s end moved to the residence: Jose Luís Múzquiz, an engineer; Francisco Ponz, who at the time was preparing to enter the School of Agricultural Engineering but who would later switch to natural sciences and become distinguished as a physiologist; and Juan Antonio Galarraga and Jesús Larralde, both of whom were studying pharmacy. Justo Martí, a lawyer who had lived in the Ferraz residence before the

civil war, gave up a position as mayor of his hometown after the war to move to Madrid and join Opus Dei.

Other students who had recently joined Opus Dei in Madrid continued to live with their parents but came frequently to Jenner. Among them were Fernando Valenciano, an engineering student who was the first person to join Opus Dei in Madrid after the war; Salvador Canals, a lawyer and future judge of the Holy Roman Rota; Gonzalo Ortiz de Zarate, a student of naval architecture; Alvaro del Almo, a geneticist; Alberto Ullastres, an economist and future minister of development; and Jose Antonio Sabater, a future high-school teacher and one of the founders of the first school started by members of Opus Dei.

For members of Opus Dei, living under the same roof is much less important than sharing the same spirit and aspirations. In fact, today the vast majority of the members of Opus Dei are married and live with their families. Even the members who are celibate frequently live outside of Opus Dei centers, often because their work requires them to do so. This is no obstacle to their living their vocation to the full. Nonetheless, as the first center in which a substantial number of members lived together, Jenner represented a significant development because it greatly facilitated rapid assimilation of the spirit of the Work.

Discretion

The members of Opus Dei were often content in these early stages to tell people about what they were trying to do and the spirit that animated them, without immediately talking about Opus Dei as an organization. A student attending the meditations or one of the classes of Christian formation given at the Jenner residence would gradually become familiar with the spirit that animated the members but might not know about their personal dedication to God in an organization called Opus Dei.

An important reason for talking during these early years more about specific activities and the spirit that animated them than about Opus Dei was that, as a matter of canon law, Opus Dei simply did not exist. Escrivá kept the bishop of Madrid informed

about his personal activities and those of the Work and enjoyed his blessing and support. There was, however, as yet no entity to which the Church had given its official blessing. Under these circumstances, any attempt to explain Opus Dei outside the context of the spiritual life of someone who had a personal interest in it was bound to prove difficult and often fruitless.

Their approach to explaining Opus Dei also reflected the nature of the vocation they had received. It involves living to the full their baptismal vocation as lay Catholics in and through their work and their dealings with others, without setting themselves off outwardly from other Catholic citizens. Like all Catholics, they are called to bear witness to Christ, but in a personal rather than an institutional way. They take this calling seriously, and no one who knows them at all well will fail to notice their faith and their commitment to Christ. They feel, however, no need to open to public view their intimate, personal decision to dedicate their lives to God, proclaiming to the world, "I am trying to live my Christian vocation in a heroic manner and become a saint." They have no reason to hide their membership in Opus Dei or to keep its existence secret. They are happy to talk about it when someone needs to know about it or would benefit from hearing about it, but they prefer not to publish their personal commitments to the four winds.

The Spirit of the Jenner Residence

An important part of the spirit of Opus Dei reflected in the residence was the sense of belonging to a Christian family united not only by supernatural bonds but also by ties of human warmth. The presence of Escrivá's mother and sister and their efforts to create a homelike atmosphere in the residence contributed greatly to inculcating that sense in the members.

Looking back on their experience in Jenner, the members of Opus Dei stress above all the atmosphere of joy and optimism that characterized their lives. One of them notes that "the dominant feature of that period was happiness, with its natural consequences of good humor and optimism. It is true that there were significant difficulties . . . and some of them were incredibly pain-

ful, but none of them succeeded in disturbing the atmosphere of light and confidence and security in our way that impregnated the centers of Opus Dei and the personal lives of its members.”

The residence was also characterized by a sense of freedom. A boy from Valencia who was about to start his studies in the University of Madrid came looking for a place in the residence in September 1940. His father, who accompanied him, told Escrivá that he was looking for a safe place where his son’s coming and goings would be supervised. As the boy’s father explained what he was looking for, Escrivá’s cordial smile gave way to a serious expression. “You must have mistaken houses,” he said. “In this residence, no one is ‘watched.’ We try to help our residents be good Catholics and good citizens, free men who know how to form their own criteria and assume responsibility for their own actions. In this house we love freedom, and a person who isn’t capable of living it and respecting that of others wouldn’t really fit in here.”

As in the DYA residence before the war, the members of the Work urged their fellow residents to take their studies seriously and to apply themselves diligently. Many students who came for the first time to Jenner were struck by the silence and atmosphere of concentration in the study room. Those who returned soon came to understand that the residents did not simply happen to be serious students but were inspired by Opus Dei’s message that they were called to sanctify themselves by fulfilling their professional duties—in their case the duty to study—as well as possible, with a desire to do God’s will.

At the same time, the members of the Work emphasized that professional excellence and getting good grades were not the be-all and end-all of life but rather a way of giving glory to God and bringing others closer to him. Study, they said, is important, but at times it should give place to other more urgent duties. As Escrivá put it in a letter to his sons in Valencia:

Study is crucial for us. It’s our net. But what would we think of a fisherman who was so afraid that his net might break that instead of putting out to sea he spent hours looking after it? Jesus called Peter and Andrew while they were mending their

nets. How often, in matters of study, when considering the abundance of fish — of apostolic work — we have to settle for doing our studies piecemeal! Don't be afraid your prestige will suffer. I could tell you some very recent and beautiful examples of several of your older brothers.

Greater Responsibilities for the Members

Until the end of the civil war, Escrivá personally took care of the spiritual formation of all the men in Opus Dei. Normally he did not hear their confessions, out of respect for their freedom at a time when he was the only priest of Opus Dei. By not hearing their confessions, he also safeguarded his own ability to direct Opus Dei and its activities without having to worry that something he might say or do might reveal something he had learned through confession. The members, however, soon developed the habit of seeking his guidance and advice in informal conversations. This gradually gave rise to a custom of talking with him briefly on a weekly basis about their spiritual life and apostolate.

The growth of the Work after the civil war, the geographic dispersion of its members, and the fact that bishops from all over Spain were calling Escrivá to give retreats to the priests of their dioceses made it impossible for him to continue giving personal spiritual direction on a regular basis to all the members. In early 1940, he began to suggest to those who joined Opus Dei that they seek spiritual direction from del Portillo, whom he had named in late 1939 Secretary General of Opus Dei, or from one of the other older members of the Work.

Something similar happened with regard to the weekly classes of Christian formation that Opus Dei members called St. Raphael circles. By the middle of the 1939–1940 school year, the number of students attending them had grown to more than a hundred. Since he deliberately kept the size of each group small, this meant that Escrivá was teaching fifteen to twenty forty-five minute classes a week. In addition, he had to preach meditations and retreats, give personal spiritual direction to large numbers of people, and direct the other activities of Opus Dei. He decided

early in 1940 that the time had come for others to take over the task of giving the circles.

The members to whom this task fell received it with some trepidation. They were laymen, and in many cases they had not yet themselves received much systematic formation in the spirit of the Work or in theology. Furthermore, most of them were barely older than the people attending the classes. Nonetheless, with the materials Escrivá provided them and his help in preparing the first few classes, they soon found that the number of students attending the circles continued to grow and that some of them discovered through the circles their vocation to Opus Dei.

New Centers and Formational Activities

Opus Dei soon outgrew the residence on Jenner street. Some members who had already finished their studies and had begun working moved to a new center in an apartment on Martínez Campos Street in the fall of 1940. Among them were Jiménez Vargas, Fernández Vallespín, Botella, Rodríguez Casado, and Múzquiz. The apartment served as a base for activities with young professional men, many of them recently married. It was also the office of the Society for Intellectual Collaboration (SOCOIN), which sponsored the cultural and educational activities held there.

At about the same time, a handful of members moved to an elegant chateau with a small garden at the corner of Lagasca and Diego de Leon Streets, in one of Madrid's better residential neighborhoods. This new locale would serve as the headquarters of the Work and as a center of formation for recent vocations. The first wave of residents was limited to Escrivá and his family, del Portillo, Zorzano, and José Orlandis, a young historian who had joined Opus Dei in Valencia shortly after the end of the civil war. Escrivá celebrated the first Mass in Lagasca, as they called the new center, on Christmas Eve 1940. A few months later, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the tabernacle of the oratory for the first time by the bishop of Vitoria, Javier Lauzurica.

The young men who had recently joined the Work in Valencia, Zaragoza, and Valladolid joined those who lived in Madrid for a

period of more intense formation during the spring of 1941, taking advantage of the fact that there was space in Jenner because the residents had left Madrid to spend Holy Week and Easter with their families.

Each day Escrivá preached a meditation before Mass and spent time after meals with the others in informal get-togethers, during which light-hearted conversation about the day's events, anecdotes about apostolic activities in Madrid and elsewhere, and commentary on aspects of the spirit of Opus Dei were interwoven with songs and jokes. The "older" members of the Work (del Portillo, Zorzano, Jiménez Vargas, Casciaro, and Botella), who were in their mid-twenties to early thirties, gave classes about the spirit and apostolates of the Work. During the periods between classes, the participants often studied the typewritten texts of the various "Instructions" that Escrivá had written before the civil war. Every afternoon, they went out for a few hours of sports or to tour Madrid. This first study week was the precursor of future workshops and courses in which the members of the Work would study theology and the spirit of the Work in a setting that facilitated building family ties.

Members of Opus Dei study philosophy, theology, and other aspects of the Church's teaching throughout their lives. To accelerate their formation, single members normally also spend several years in a center of studies, where they dedicate themselves more intensely to those subjects, without giving up their professional activities or college classes. In the fall of 1941, Opus Dei opened its first center of studies on the top floor of Lagasca, in the part of the house former owners had used as servants' quarters. Casciaro was the first director of the center of studies, and Escrivá recruited a number of distinguished professors to give classes of philosophy and theology. Formation in the spirit of Opus Dei was given by Escrivá himself, helped by Casciaro and other older members. At about the same time that the center of studies began in Lagasca, the center on Martínez Campos Street moved to new quarters, and an additional center for people who had already finished their university studies also opened. Thus, by October 1941, Opus Dei had four centers in Madrid.

The Way

The expansion of Opus Dei was greatly facilitated by the publication in the fall of 1939 of Escrivá's book *The Way*. This expanded version of his earlier book, *Spiritual Considerations*, comprised 999 pithy points of meditation drawn from the author's personal spiritual life and from his experience as a spiritual director.

The Way differed sharply from most books of piety sold in Spain in the 1940s. Even its physical presentation was different. In contrast to the small black-bound prayer books with hard-to-read type that abounded at the time, *The Way* had generous dimensions (about 4 by 10 inches), a colorful cover, large type, and ample margins.

The content of *The Way* was more radical than its typography. At a time when holiness was considered the preserve of priests and religious and the apostolate of the laity was considered an extension of the mission of the hierarchy, *The Way* presented an entirely different vision. From its very first point, *The Way* spoke about the universal call to holiness and the sanctifying and apostolic value of ordinary work. It was directed to men and women involved in the affairs of the world, and it challenged them to convert their work and other occupations into a service to Christ and to their fellow men and women:

Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Make yourself felt. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love.

With your apostolic life, wipe out the trail of filth and slime left by the corrupt sowers of hatred. And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart.

A secret, an open secret: these world crises are crises of saints.

God wants a handful of men "of his own" in every human activity. And then . . . "*pax Christi in regno Christi*—the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ."

Escrivá presented his message in *The Way* with a force that came from his own life of prayer and intimacy with God and from his experience as a director of souls. *The Way* attracts readers not

with the cold light of a well-elaborated intellectual synthesis, but with the fire and passion of a heart deeply in love with Jesus Christ. The clarity of vision that characterizes *The Way* comes not from abstract speculation but from the graces Escrivá received on October 2, 1928, from his daily efforts to make them part of the fabric of his own life, and from his experience in transmitting them to others.

The Way teaches its readers to pray in simple, direct fashion, talking confidently with a God who is father and brother. Rather than imposing more or less rigid schemes and methods, Escrivá encourages his readers to strike out on their own on paths of prayer, talking to God face-to-face in their own words:

You say that you don't know how to pray? Put yourself in the presence of God, and once you have said, "Lord, I don't know how to pray!" rest assured that you have begun to do so.

You write: "To pray is to talk with God. But about what?" About what? About Him, about yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, noble ambitions, daily worries, weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions: and Love and reparation.

In a word: to get to know him and to get to know yourself: "To get acquainted!"

The book had an extraordinary impact on many readers, especially university students and recent graduates. An industrial engineer who would later join Opus Dei describes his first encounter with *The Way*:

One day a friend of mine lent me a book entitled *The Way*. It was the first I'd heard of it. I quickly thumbed through it and realized that it was extremely interesting. I remember exactly how I returned home, ate a quick dinner, shut myself up in my room and read the whole book at one sitting, from the first point to point 999. I also remember resolving to follow up that hasty reading with a much slower one. I was indescribably enthused with its spiritual message.

Zorzano

At the end of the civil war, Zorzano resumed work for the railroad as director of research and development of rolling stock and locomotives. He would be remembered by his subordinates both for his competence and for the personal interest he took in them and their problems. When one of them had trouble with a project, rather than taking it away and assigning it to someone else, Zorzano would work with him until he learned to do it, explaining patiently the things he did not understand. Despite the intolerant tenor of the times, he worked easily and naturally with people of diverse backgrounds, including one employee who was shunned by many others in the immediate aftermath of the Nationalists' victory because he had been charged with being a "Red."

In most Spanish offices at the time, people worked from 9:30 or 10:00 to 1:30 or 2:00, went home for the main meal of the day, and resumed work again around 4:00 or 4:30. In the railroad office, however, people worked from 8:00 to 2:00. This required Zorzano to get up at 5:15 in order to do his mental prayer and hear Mass before beginning work. In a society in which supper was not usually served until 9:30 or 10:00, this was an unheard of hour to rise, but Zorzano was pleased with the arrangement because it allowed him to dedicate the entire afternoon and evening to apostolic activities of *Opus Dei* and to serving as its treasurer. He turned down an offer of a job in Valencia that would have been better paid and would have allowed him to have a more normal schedule because he thought he could contribute more to *Opus Dei*'s development by remaining in Madrid.

Being treasurer of *Opus Dei* did not involve handling a lot of money. There was little enough to administer other than debts. Zorzano rolled up his sleeves and helped install the centers that *Opus Dei* opened in Madrid in the years immediately following the civil war. The country had been decimated by the war. Most items were in short supply, and food was rationed. He spent long hours shopping for bargains and going from place to place trying to buy food for the residence. When he arrived home, he would often help move and repair furniture.

Zorzano kept the books carefully, balancing them down to a fraction of a peseta. He understood that being off by a few pesetas was in itself insignificant, but since he was offering his work to God, he wanted to do it well, down to the smallest detail, as he had learned from Escrivá. "People who keep books for a salary," he said, "try to have everything up to date and carefully done, so as not to lose their job. It would be a great lack of generosity if the love of God didn't move us to do as much."

At the end of October 1940, he moved to the new house that Opus Dei had opened on Lagasca Street. The furnace was broken, and there was no money to repair it. He had begun to lose weight and to have difficulty sleeping. The cold affected him more than most people, but he accepted the situation with a smile and without complaint. In July 1941, his doctor finally discovered the cause of Zorzano's lack of appetite, loss of weight, and inability to sleep: Hodgkins lymphoma, a form of cancer of the lymph glands.

The doctor gave him two years to live and, in November 1941, began sessions of radiation therapy that would continue until May 1942. Despite increasing weakness, Zorzano kept up his usual work both for the railroad and as administrator of Opus Dei, including supervising the installation of several new centers of Opus Dei in Madrid, a task that required him to continue going from store to store looking for furniture and housewares. Nothing in his behavior betrayed the seriousness of his condition. "You see how happy and natural he is," Casciari commented one day to a young man who had recently joined Opus Dei. "Well, he has two years to live, and he knows it."

During the week before Christmas 1942, Zorzano attended a retreat with other members of Opus Dei in the center on Diego de Leon. In a meditation on death, Escrivá stressed that, as the Church prays in the Preface of the Mass for the Dead, "Life is changed, not taken away." Therefore, he said, when a member of Opus Dei learned that his death was imminent, his reaction should be that of the psalmist, "I rejoiced when they said to me, let us go up to the house of the Lord." After the meditation, Zorzano remained in the oratory. Thinking mistakenly that he was alone, he said quietly but audibly, "Lord, I'm ready."

Early in 1943, Zorzano had to enter a clinic. Escrivá told him that he might have only a few days left and not more than a few months. An instinctive grimace crossed his face, but he reacted immediately and asked Escrivá what intentions he should pray for when he got to heaven. Talking to other members of the Work, Escrivá commented, "I only hope to have his disposition when I have to die."

Escrivá urged the members of the Work to spare no effort in caring for Zorzano, and to do so with the affection with which a good mother takes care of her sick child. "If necessary," he said, "we would steal a bit of heaven for him, and our Lord would forgive us." During the six months until his death, members of the Work accompanied Zorzano continuously, day and night.

On the feast of the Epiphany, when Christmas gifts are given in Spain, Zorzano received a little toy train, which he put on the night stand. "It's fun to look at," he said, "and it reminds me that soon I'll begin my trip. It's a bit small, but that way it will be easier to slip into heaven. I already have my ticket."

The medical director of the clinic, who was not a member of Opus Dei, recalls: "Whenever I entered his room he received me with a smile and a joke. Just looking at him, you would have thought he felt all right, but I knew that he suffered terribly. He was not a patient but a saint."

The secret of Zorzano's good humor in the face of pain lies in his faith in the value of suffering offered to God out of love. He said:

Our obligation is to fulfill the duty of each moment. My only duty is to suffer. . . . I don't have to worry about anything else. I suffer a lot. It's surprising how much one can suffer. At times it seems you can't suffer any more, but our Lord gives more strength. What a consolation to think that nothing is wasted! We have to move the Work forward by suffering with supernatural spirit. Pain purifies. The longer the trial, the better. In that way we will be more purified.

On July 15, 1943, Zorzano died. When the owner of a store where he had gone frequently to purchase things for the residence

learned of his death, he remarked, "Don Isidoro was a saint." One of the members of the Work wrote in his notebook a few short phrases that sum up Zorzano's life and the spirit of Opus Dei that informed it: "He passed unnoticed. He fulfilled his duty. He loved greatly. He took care of the details and always sacrificed himself."

* * *

At the same time that Opus Dei was growing in Madrid, it was putting down roots elsewhere. World War II made it impossible to start its activities in other countries; but as soon as the civil war ended, members of the Work began traveling to various Spanish cities to start Opus Dei's apostolates. Within a few years, it would be well established in many of the most important university towns in Spain.

Expansion outside Madrid

❧ 1939–1942

A Retreat in Valencia

In the months immediately following the end of the civil war, Opus Dei resumed its incipient activities in Valencia. Escrivá gave a retreat to a group of university students from June 5 to 11, 1939, in the Residential College of the Patriarch, located in the town of Burjasot a few miles north of the city. The invitation to give the retreat came from a good friend, Fr. Antonio Rodilla, the rector of the college.

While walking around the grounds of the college before the retreat began, the students noticed a large hand-painted banner left behind by the Republican War College, which had occupied the building during the civil war. The banner bore the motto of the War College, attributed to the distinguished Spanish poet Antonio Machado: “*Cada caminante siga su camino*” (Let every wayfarer follow his own way). When a student wanted to tear the banner down, Escrivá restrained him, explaining that in this case they could learn a lesson from their former enemy. Throughout the retreat, he repeatedly returned to the phrase to stress the importance of freedom in God’s service.

This emphasis on freedom contrasted sharply with the prevailing view in postwar Spain. One of the people who joined Opus Dei shortly after the end of the civil war remarked, “At that time, people [in Spain] didn’t talk much about freedom. They esteemed other values, such as service and sacrifice for the fatherland, abnegation in the midst of suffering, and heroism to the point of risking one’s life in the defense of noble ideals.”

Escrivá was, of course, anxious to find members for Opus Dei.

He did not talk about the Work in the meditations he gave, but during the retreat he spoke privately to several young men about it, to such good effect that, by the end of the retreat, Amadeo de Fuenmayor, a law student from Valencia, decided that God was asking him to dedicate his life to him in Opus Dei. A few weeks later, another participant in the retreat, José Manuel Casas Torres, who was studying both law and geography, also joined Opus Dei.

Although Escrivá was anxious to find people who could understand and live the spirit of Opus Dei, he was even more determined to guide each person along the path that God intended for him. For example, he urged one of the young men who attended the retreat to devote himself to the apostolate of Catholic Action. Similarly, another student who received spiritual direction from Escrivá after the civil war recalls that, although Escrivá explained Opus Dei to him, “he always told [him] clearly and strongly that [he] should continue working in Catholic Action.” Some time later, after consulting with a priest who agreed with his decision, that student decided to relinquish his activities in Catholic Action. But when he asked Escrivá’s advice, he suggested that he continue serving the Church in Catholic Action, in keeping with God’s plan.

Escrivá’s desire to help people follow God’s plan for them motivated him to preach numerous retreats to diocesan priests and religious. Upon concluding the retreat in Burjasot for college students, he began a retreat for priests of the diocese of Valencia, which had lost a fourth of its priests during the civil war. Most of the survivors had been in hiding for three years. As a means of rejuvenating the war-ravaged structures of the diocese, the archbishop, who had met Escrivá in Burgos, asked him to give a retreat for recently appointed pastors. This retreat in Valencia was the first of many that Escrivá would give to priests from various dioceses throughout Spain. He also gave retreats to a number of religious communities.

“Knockdown Graces”

Neither Fuenmayor nor Casas Torres had had any significant contact with Opus Dei prior to the retreat. Today it would be

inconceivable that anyone would join Opus Dei on such short notice. In the years before and immediately following the civil war, however, God granted people special graces that enabled them to receive a vocation to dedicate their entire lives to God in Opus Dei after only brief contact with the Work.

These extraordinary graces, which Escrivá sometimes called “knockdown graces,” were the fruit of Escrivá’s own prayer and of the prayer of other members of the Work. During the retreat in Burjasot, he had written more than once to the members of the Work in Madrid, asking them to pray for those attending the retreat. He had sent a similar request to three members stationed in the town of Olot. A few weeks earlier, he had written to the bishop of Avila, for whom he had special respect and affection, asking for his prayers: “This sinner always approaches his bishop with hand outstretched. I’m due to give a number of retreats, including several for priests in Valencia and Madrid, . . . and I need your prayers and your paternal and priestly blessing.” During the retreat in Burjasot he renewed his request in another letter addressed to the bishop: “I’ve begun the first retreat. For it, as well as the remaining ones, I need our Jesus’ very special help. . . . I turn to you, my Bishop, because I know you’ll tell him so. May he reward you for it!”

José Orlandis

A striking example of the effect of these “knockdown graces” is the vocation of Jose Orlandis, who joined Opus Dei in Valencia in 1939. His story is not unique, but his published memoirs provide an unusually detailed account of his experience.

Orlandis had been studying history when the war broke out, and he soon found himself serving as an officer in the Nationalist army. In August 1939, he was stationed on the island of Mallorca, but he received leave to take special exams in Valencia for students whose studies had been interrupted by the civil war. Because it was impossible to predict the duration of the exams, the leave was not for a fixed number of days but extended until the end of exams.

In Valencia, Orlandis ran into his old friend Casas Torres, who had just joined Opus Dei. Casas Torres suggested that Orlandis attend a retreat for university students that Escrivá was going to give in the College of the Patriarch beginning September 10. Orlandis said he would attend if he had time between the end of his exams and the date on which he had to return to Mallorca.

Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, which sparked the beginning of World War II, put the army in a state of alert but did not directly threaten Spain. To avoid panic, military authorities did not immediately cancel all leaves, and Orlandis was permitted to stay in Valencia to finish his exams. The tense international situation, however, sharply increased the pressure on Orlandis to return to his unit as soon as his exams were over. He booked a passage back to Mallorca for September 11 and told Casas Torres that he could not attend the retreat.

As he was preparing to leave Valencia, Orlandis ran into Escrivá on the street outside the cathedral. He explained to him that he would not be able to attend the retreat because he had finished his exams, his leave had expired, a new war had broken out, and he had already purchased his boat ticket to return to his unit. To his amazement, Escrivá did not seem impressed: "You could do something else. If you've already gotten a ticket, you could go and exchange it for one on the next boat and start the retreat tomorrow. If the colonel wants to put you under arrest when you return, that's all right. He'll arrest you, and you'll serve your sentence." Surprisingly, Orlandis, who had never met Escrivá before, replied, "Fine, Father," and went directly to the ticket office to exchange his ticket for one on the boat the following week.

During the retreat, Escrivá urged the participants to pray for Poland, which was suffering from the German invasion, but the central theme was their calling to follow Christ. Escrivá frequently used texts of the Gospel that narrate the vocation of our Lady, of the rich young man who turned down Christ's invitation to follow him, and of the blind beggar, Bartimeus, who responded generously to Jesus' call to come and be healed. In private conversations, both Escrivá and del Portillo explained to Orlandis the

vocation to Opus Dei, and on September 14, 1939, he joined the Work. In his memoirs, after narrating his vocation, he writes:

Someone might smile ironically and think to himself, "Of course. Given the Founder's overwhelming personality, who could resist?" I would respond to such a skeptic that the attraction of a strong personality could explain an initial enthusiastic response, but not more than half a century of perseverance. That would be impossible, especially in Opus Dei, without a call from God and the help of his grace.

When Orlandis returned to his unit a week late, the colonel did not even question him.

"The Burrow"

The original plan was to establish a student residence in Valencia and Madrid by the beginning of the 1939-1940 school year. However, the few Opus Dei members in Valencia were unable to find suitable space, so in August they rented a small apartment. Its diminutive size and poverty led to its nickname, *El Cubil* ("The Burrow"). It had a dining room, a passageway, and two small rooms, one of which was used to store the recently printed copies of *The Way*. The other did multiple duty as study room, living room, and place to pray in the absence of a oratory.

Despite the diminutive size of the apartment, it was difficult to pay the rent and cover other expenses. At one point, the phone company disconnected the phone for failure to pay the bill. The furnishings were so sparse that when Escrivá came down with a fever after preaching a retreat for students in Valencia in September 1939, the best they could offer him was an army cot and an old curtain and some cardboard for blankets.

The poverty of the surroundings did not deter a growing number of young men from coming to *El Cubil*. By January 1940, there were about a dozen students in the St. Raphael circle that had begun to meet in August 1939. Following Escrivá's advice about keeping the number of people in each circle small, they split the

group into two. Soon new vocations also arrived: Salvador Moret, Antonio Ivars Moreno, and Florencio Sánchez Bella, and his brother Ismael, a law student who worked nights as a linotype operator for the local newspaper.

Escrivá celebrated Mass for the first time in *El Cubil* on February 1, 1940, using vestments and other items lent by a priest friend in Valencia. Before the Mass, he directed a meditation on the efficacy of sacrifice and the need to die to oneself, like a grain of wheat. Although he did not talk about himself, his own life was a vivid example of self-sacrifice. There was no space in *El Cubil* for him to talk with the many students who wanted to see him for spiritual direction, so he was forced to take long walks with them along the banks of the Turia River. One of the members of the Work noted in the diary of *El Cubil*: "The Father says he needs to relax and get some sun, but the truth is he's exhausted from so much walking. His feet have been swollen for two days, as they always are when he comes to Valencia."

A Student Residence in Valencia

The members of the Work in Valencia began searching in the early summer of 1940 for space that could serve as a student residence during the 1940-1941 academic year. After canvassing much of the city, they found a place on the same street as *El Cubil*. The building they found had been used as a hospital during the civil war and was dilapidated, but it was large and had considerable promise.

A few trips with a handcart were sufficient to move the meager furnishings of *El Cubil* to the new residence, which they referred to by the name of the street on which it was located, Samaniego. On July 30, 1940, they closed *El Cubil* and turned their attention to fixing up and furnishing Samaniego, which would have room for twenty students. Casciaro moved from Madrid to Valencia to take on the position of director of the residence and was largely responsible for decorating it. The entrance hall, which had an extremely high ceiling, posed a special challenge. To fill the space, Casciaro designed a large wall hanging, which Carmen Escrivá made by

sewing together pieces of material. It featured a shield with thistles in the bottom half and stars in the top half and the motto "*Per aspera ad astra*" (Through hardships to the stars).

Whenever he came to Valencia, Escrivá tried to bring decorative items with him —some from his family's home, some donated by the families of other members of the Work, and some rescued from the ruins of the prewar residence on Ferraz Street. The members of the Work living in Valencia searched the homes of their parents and relatives for pieces of furniture that could be brought to the residence. Little by little the house began to take on the appearance of a family home, although money was so short that for several months they could not afford electric light and had to make do with candles.

Escrivá blessed the residence on September 20, 1940. In the course of the ceremony, he expressed his hope that soon it would be possible to have Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament there. The house already had a small private chapel, which became the oratory of the residence. It could be expanded by opening sliding doors that connected it to two adjoining rooms. The altar was decorated with tiles dating from the seventeenth century. Federico Suárez, a history student who had recently joined Opus Dei, had found them in a heap of rubbish at a construction site. For the altarpiece, a member of the Work living in Madrid, Fernando Delapuenta, who would later become a well-known painter, copied a crucifixion by the Dutch artist Roger Van der Weyden. Escrivá celebrated the first Mass in the oratory on November 2, 1940. After reserving the Blessed Sacrament in a borrowed tabernacle, he exclaimed, "How happy I am! Another tabernacle!"

When Samaniego Residence opened its door at the beginning of the school year, three members of the Work were living there — Casciaro, the director, Fuenmayor, the assistant director, and Jesus Urteaga, who had joined Opus Dei during the summer and had come to Valencia to begin his studies at the university. There was only one resident who did not belong to the Work, and other residents were slow in coming. To help make ends meet, the members of the Work opened an academy that prepared high-school

students for university entrance exams and offered classes in civil law for law students.

Gradually the residence filled up, eventually reaching its capacity of twenty residents. Many other students came to study and to attend talks and lectures as well as classes of Christian formation. During the first year of its operation, five of the students living in Samaniego or coming to activities there joined Opus Dei.

Valladolid

During the months following the end of the civil war, the members of the Work also began to spread their activities to Valladolid, Zaragoza, and Barcelona. All three were university cities, where there were good prospects of meeting young men who might have a vocation to Opus Dei.

On November 30, 1939, Escrivá and Vallespín set out by train for Valladolid. Spain's railroads had deteriorated greatly during the war, and it took the train five hours to cover the hundred miles that separate Madrid from Valladolid. Not having money for a taxi, they walked through the cold, foggy streets of the city, carrying their baggage only to find that the hotel where they had hoped to stay had no rooms. Eventually they found a spot in the Hotel Español. They had brought with them a list of students who were friends of people they knew in Madrid. Their plan was to try to talk with as many people as possible about spiritual ideals and the formation Opus Dei offered.

In the morning, Escrivá directed the meditation, centering his attention on the vocation of Christ's first apostles. "We have come here," he commented, "to work for Jesus Christ, so we have already met with success in our undertaking. Even if we don't manage to see anyone, we will not consider the trip a failure. We will try to contact the people we want to meet, and they will either come to see us or won't. But even if we don't accomplish anything, our Lord will be content with us."

In fact, all of the fellows they had on their list showed up at the hotel except one, who was out of town. Escrivá spoke with them about love of God, sanctifying their studies, and helping their

friends and relatives draw closer to Christ. The next morning, one of the students came back, bringing along a friend. Two more students showed up to have lunch with Escrivá and Vallespín.

Barredo, Hernández de Garnica, and Rodríguez Casado went to Valladolid at the end of December 1939. They met with most of the students who had come the first time and a number of their friends. A month later, Escrivá, del Portillo, Botella, and Rodríguez Casado drove to Valladolid in a secondhand car that broke down so frequently that they didn't reach the city until 3 A.M. Among the students they talked with on this visit were Juan Antonio Paniagua and his friend Teodoro Ruíz, a law student. Ruíz describes his first meeting with Escrivá:

After warm greetings and brief introductions, our founder began to explain the reason for his presence in Valladolid and the main features of his apostolic work. He began by saying that we had to be authentic Catholics, and he explained what it meant to take seriously our calling to follow Christ. Nowadays this all seems quite clear and natural, but then it was completely new. In that period a great deal of importance was given to outward manifestations of piety, but the individual's personal relationship with God was often neglected.

Even more of a novelty than Opus Dei's emphasis on an interior life of personal relationship with Christ through prayer and sacrifice was its message about professional work as a means to holiness and apostolate and as an opportunity for practicing virtues such as industriousness, loyalty, fellowship, and cheerfulness. It was the first time in his life that Ruíz had heard that God was counting on his daily efforts to master the civil code and his friendships with his fellow students to apply the redemption to many men and women. Decades later, he still recalled his initial impressions:

Del Portillo spoke in detail about the life of piety fostered in this apostolic undertaking. He stressed unity with God through prayer and the sacraments — an intense spiritual life

without anything strange, unusual, or ostentatious, a solid piety without externals. For a priest to say this was a novelty. But for an everyday, normal fellow to say it, especially one finishing highway engineering (which then in Spain represented the aristocracy of the university), was cause for endless surprise.

After del Portillo's presentation, Botella gave a talk "strongly stressing the importance of professional work, of scholarship, of making a new contribution to what others had studied." Afterwards, Rodríguez Casado, a historian, spoke about the life of the early Christians. Hearing him speak, Ruíz said, he saw that while he himself knew a few anecdotes about the early Christians,

[he] had missed the most basic reality, namely, that the early Christians lived the Gospel well because they had learned it very well. Their spirit, boldness, and apostolic drive changed the world. Such a description didn't coincide with the popular image many of us had of them as good people but almost always hidden in the catacombs.

After explaining the theory, the members of the Work asked their new acquaintances to put it into practice by inviting their friends and fellow students to come over to the hotel. Ruíz and the others spread out throughout the city and returned with friends in tow. Many of them, in their turn, went out and came back bringing others with them. Soon the hotel room was packed.

Despite the numbers, Escrivá spoke to each of the students who had come, at least for a few minutes. Ruíz's first meeting with Escrivá lasted only about ten minutes. Escrivá began asking him about his law studies and suggested that he consider getting a doctorate and pursuing a teaching career because of doors it would open for apostolate. Then he turned the conversation to spiritual life. Ruíz recalls his saying, "I'd like to ask you a few questions you might find annoying or uncomfortable. If you prefer, don't answer me, and we'll continue being good friends." Escrivá then talked with him about the importance of frequent

Holy Communion and of "human love lived in a noble and pure manner." Ruíz says he found Escrivá's comments "so much to-the-point" that he still recalls "the deep impression" they made on him.

Members of the Work made frequent trips to Valladolid in February and March 1940. Between visits they wrote to the students they had met there. In the course of a long walk around the city in early March, Botella explained to Ruíz that the apostolic activities he had been taking part in were not just the result of the zeal of a priest and a few people who were enthusiastic about his ideas. They were the activities of an organization willed by God to which Escrivá and the others had dedicated their lives. "Is God calling you to dedicate yourself to him?" Botella asked.

Ruíz talked with Escrivá later that same afternoon about his possible vocation. Escrivá advised him to seek our Lord's advice in prayer. "The only thing I can do," he said, "is to pray for you and ask God to enlighten you and to help you decide correctly. If you like, you can attend my Mass tomorrow and pray for the matter. I too will pray for it." After Mass, Ruíz told Escrivá that he was ready for anything.

Five other students joined Opus Dei in Valladolid over the next few weeks: Juan Antonio Paniagua, Alberto Taboada and his brother Ramón, Antonio Moreno, and Javier Silió. In addition a large group of students was interested in receiving formation, and a few of them offered promise of a vocation in the near future. The need for a place they could call their own was becoming urgent.

They rented in April 1940 a small apartment that belonged to Ruíz's father and called it *El Rincón*, The Corner. At first, the only furniture was six chairs. There was no oratory, but they installed a small statue of the Blessed Virgin on a ledge in the living room. In the afternoons, a number of students would gather in *El Rincón* to study. They would take a break from their studies to spend some time in mental prayer, gathered around the statue of our Lady while one of them read, from time to time, a few points from Escrivá's book *The Way*.

Escrivá gave a day of recollection for students in Valladolid in late June 1940 at a high school run by the Christian Brothers.

Among the students staying in the residence attached to the school were Ignacio Echeverria and Jesús Urteaga. Both had just finished high school in San Sebastian and were spending some time in Valladolid preparing for a college entrance examination. They took advantage of the opportunity to meet the author of *The Way* and soon began to correspond regularly with members of the Work in Valladolid. Before the end of the summer, both of them had joined Opus Dei.

Zaragoza

Another natural spot for Opus Dei's expansion was Zaragoza. It had an important university. Escrivá knew people there from his seminary days and had renewed contacts during several visits to the city in the course of the civil war. Albareda was from a small town near Zaragoza, and his older brother, Manuel, was a prominent citizen of the city.

Albareda made an initial trip to Zaragoza in late November 1939. After visiting the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar to place in Mary's hands Opus Dei's future apostolate in the city, he explained to his brother what the Work would like to do. Since Opus Dei would not carry on its activities in a diocese without the blessing of the local bishop, he also asked his brother to request the archbishop's permission for Opus Dei to work in Zaragoza. On this first trip, Albareda contacted several students and explained to them briefly the goals and ideals that inspired Opus Dei's activities.

Encouraged by the results of Albareda's trip, Escrivá, del Portillo, and Albareda set out by car for Zaragoza the day after Christmas 1939. They had not gotten far from Madrid, however, when the car broke down and had to be towed. Escrivá, who had a fever, returned to Madrid with del Portillo, while Albareda caught a train to Zaragoza. Two days later, although Escrivá had not fully recovered from the fever, he and del Portillo took the train to Zaragoza. Albareda, his brother Manuel, and Alvira, who had accompanied Escrivá in the crossing of the Pyrenees, met them at the station and took them to Manuel's home.

The initial activities in Zaragoza were similar to those in Valladolid: contacting students and young professionals who were friends of friends and explaining to them the ideal of holiness and apostolate in the midst of the world through the sanctification of work and other daily activities. They also talked about establishing soon a student residence in Zaragoza.

Members of the Work did not return to Zaragoza until mid-February 1940, but from then until the end of the school year, several of them, including Múzquiz, del Portillo, Botella, and Rodríguez Casado frequently spent the weekend there. Neither Manuel Albareda's home, where they stayed on a number of occasions, nor the hotel rooms they rented on other occasions offered much space for personal conversations. When they wanted to talk privately, they often went for walks through the city.

Múzquiz, for instance, explained Opus Dei to a young student from the province of Navarra, José Javier López Jacoíste, as they walked round and round the main square in the center of the city. It was a pleasant afternoon, and the square was packed with cadets from the military academy, soldiers stationed in Zaragoza, families, and nannies with children, all out for a Sunday stroll around the square, as was the custom in the city at the time. When Múzquiz finished his explanation and mentioned that Jesús Arrellano, another student from Navarra, had decided to give his life to God in Opus Dei, López Jacoíste responded on the spot, without even waiting to return to the hotel, "Me too." Arrellano and López Jacoíste were joined over the next few months by Javier Ayala and José Ramón Madurga.

Escrivá could not go to Zaragoza frequently since he had to cover activities in Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, and Barcelona, as well as preaching numerous retreats to diocesan priests. Whenever he was able to get to Zaragoza, however, he met personally with each of the young men, as well as talking with them in groups. One of the students recalls his conversation with Escrivá:

"Are you able to leap over the ramparts?" he asked me with enormous force and supernatural energy. The war in Spain

was still fresh in our minds and this image —the final assault on enemy trenches undertaken with boldness and bravery captured the high point of every battle.

The Father's proposal was both humanly attractive and supernaturally irresistible. With God's help we could overcome all obstacles, leaping over them with the strength of grace. We could lead a life of loving service to God, confronting the challenge of daily work and study with supernatural courage and constant effort, and thus place God at the peak of all human activities.

Escrivá gave the members of the Work a meditation on March 16, 1940. He focused on the text of the Gospel, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (Jn 15: 16). Later in the month, he met with them in a café. As so often happened in the informal gatherings that Opus Dei members called with the common Spanish term *tertulias* (get-togethers), Escrivá's conversation moved effortlessly and without breaks from humorous anecdotes about recent events and questions about the participants' studies to topics of interior life and apostolate. On this occasion, one of the participants recalls:

He spoke to us about being aware of God's presence and about the countless ways we could recall it with love and ever increasing intensity. He said that quite often this point should be the subject of our particular examination of conscience. In this way we would live a life of faith, which means living a supernatural life. Only thus could we go forward and become contemplatives in the midst of absorbing work and the hustle and bustle surrounding us.

He also spoke about sincerity. He asked us to live total simplicity as a means to ward off the wiles of the devil. In particular, he pointed out, sincerity must be absolute in three points: faith, purity, and vocation. . . .

What he told us about the guardian angels was profound and particularly attractive: "They'll perform a thousand ser-

vices for you and pull you out of many straits. You'll always live secure under their protection and constant help."

By the beginning of the 1940-1941 school year, the apostolate of Opus Dei in Zaragoza was well established. During the next two years, members of the Work would travel frequently to Zaragoza to take care of the apostolate there. The first center opened in 1942 and was called Baltasar Gracián, from the name of the street on which it was located.

Barcelona

During the weeks spent in Barcelona in 1937 trying to make contact with the contraband agents who would eventually lead them across the mountains into Andorra, the members of the Work had prayed a great deal for the future apostolate of Opus Dei in that city. A little more than two years later, on December 30, 1939, on their way from Zaragoza to Valencia, Escrivá and del Portillo stopped for a day in Barcelona. They visited with Alfonso Balcells, a young doctor who had met Jiménez Vargas during the war and had attended the retreat Escrivá gave in Valencia in September 1939. They also tried to contact Rafael Termes, who had been del Portillo's classmate in officer candidate school, but he was out of town. They left a note for him, and a few days later Casciaro, who had to go to Barcelona on family business, visited him.

These brief visits were the beginnings of Opus Dei's activities in Barcelona. Members of the Work wrote regularly to friends and acquaintances in Barcelona and backed up their letters with a stream of prayer. In a letter to members of the Work in Valencia, Escrivá asked, "Are you writing to Ballcells? I think I may have misspelled his name. But I pray to his guardian angel for him, and some day he'll thank me for it."

Vallespín and Fuenmayor traveled from Valencia to Barcelona in mid-February 1940, and a few days later Múzquiz took advantage of a professional trip to spend some time with Balcells and Termes. He returned to Madrid with news that Termes was

interested in joining Opus Dei, although he wanted to speak first with Escrivá.

Escrivá, del Portillo, Zorzano, and Hernández de Gárnica went from Zaragoza to Barcelona on March 31, 1940. Termes could not meet with them in the morning because he was marching in a parade to mark the first anniversary of the end of the civil war. In the afternoon, he came to see Escrivá, still dressed in his officer's uniform bedecked with combat ribbons. "I remember quite well his opening words," Termes recalls. "To break the ice, he said with affection, 'Here's a brave officer who is not afraid to leap over the parapet.' After that it was all very easy. The Father's words dissipated all my doubts and fears and filled me with trust. I asked to be admitted to the Work." Termes, who would later become a prominent banker, was the first person to join Opus Dei in Barcelona.

José María Casciaro, Pedro Casciaro's younger brother, was living in Barcelona with an uncle while he finished his high school studies, because his father had had to flee into political exile in French North Africa. Through Pedro, he knew quite a bit about the Work and its spirit, and he had met Escrivá during a trip to Madrid in the spring of 1939. Gradually he had moved from indifference toward religion to a relatively fervent spiritual life and had begun to consider a vocation to Opus Dei. In his memoirs, he describes his state of mind:

God's grace made me see quite clearly that my path was to choose Him above all creatures, in a divine adventure. It seemed to me an adventure, but at the same time I felt a serene security, an interior confidence that can only come from God himself who calls. I don't recall that I found it very hard to accept the idea of total self-giving. I made up my mind freely, without any trauma, although I was aware that it was a very serious decision. Every time that I considered this choice—to say yes to God's call—I felt a little fear, but much greater interior joy.

He took advantage of Escrivá's stay in Barcelona in May 1940 to tell him he wanted to join Opus Dei. After questioning the

young man at some length to see if he understood fully what being a member of Opus Dei involved, Escrivá asked him in a serious tone whether his brother Pedro had pushed him. In the face of his negative reply, Escrivá asked the same question twice more in different words. Having satisfied himself that José María was acting freely and understood the implications of what he was doing, Escrivá welcomed him as a member of Opus Dei.

The members of the Work in Barcelona soon set out to find an apartment in which to hold activities. None was old enough to sign a contract, so they asked Balcells to sign the lease on an apartment they found near the university. He agreed to do so although he was not a member of the Work and would not be for several years. With a touch of irony, they called the tiny new center *El Palau* [The Palace].

Escrivá wrote to his sons in Barcelona from Avila, where he was giving a retreat to diocesan priests on July 1, 1940:

We finally have a house in Barcelona! You can't imagine the joy this news gives me. Unquestionably it is due to the bishop's blessing: "I bless you all wholeheartedly, and I bless the house!" said Bishop Díaz Gómara the last time I was there. This blessing explains the success of your search for *El Palau*. The sure path to follow, in our spirit, is never to separate ourselves from the *ordinary* ecclesiastical authority. I am certain that *El Palau* will give much glory to God, in a silent way.

Escrivá ended the letter with an urgent request for prayers: "Be united to my intentions in your sacrifices and prayer. Pray, pray, pray! That's my motto. Then everything will turn out very well."

The growth of Opus Dei in Barcelona during the next few years paralleled that in other cities. Its distinctive feature was that the campaign of slander against the Work, which occurred all over Spain, as we will see in the next chapters, was particularly virulent there. The situation was all the more difficult because the members of the Work were young, few in number, and separated by many miles from Escrivá and the rest of the members. Until May 1943, they did not even have an oratory with the Blessed

Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. One of them later summed up the situation:

We were a handful of students who were beginning our university studies. We had no written material except *The Way*. We had no priests who knew our spirit, nor did we have spiritual or apostolic experience or the possibility of traveling frequently to Madrid to talk with the Father and our older brothers. Nonetheless, our way was very clear! Self-giving without holding anything back, sanctification of our ordinary work, apostolate among our friends, collective humility, and a life of prayer. Although we still did not know many other aspects of our spirit, we had absolute confidence in our Founder.

In the midst of the most bitter phase of the persecution, in May 1941, Escrivá sent a brief note to the handful of members of the Work in Barcelona. It summarizes the early history of Opus Dei in the city: "May Jesus watch over my sons in *El Palau! Spe gaudentes, in tribulatione patientes, oratione instantes* [Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer (Rom 12: 12)]. A big hug."

First Members' Attitudes

A major factor in the rapid growth of Opus Dei in Madrid and in outlying cities in the years following the civil war was the way in which its first members threw themselves without reserve into the task. This was made possible in part by the fact that they had all embraced apostolic celibacy. As we have seen, on October 2, 1928, Escrivá understood that the message God had given him was directed to both single and married people of all social classes and professions. Today a large majority of the members are married. In the years immediately following the civil war, however, Opus Dei was still concentrating on building up a group of single members who would have the time and the freedom needed both to acquire formation and to carry out Opus Dei's formative activi-

ties. There were some married people who were in close contact with Opus Dei and were striving to put its spirit into practice, but they would not formally become members of Opus Dei until 1949.

To meet more young people who could themselves respond to a divine call to apostolic celibacy in Opus Dei, the members of Opus Dei, many of whom were carrying more than the usual load of classes at the university, cheerfully spent sleepless Saturday nights in the third-class compartments of rattle-trap trains going to distant provincial capitals. On Sunday evenings, they got back on the train and spent another sleepless night, arriving back in Madrid barely in time for classes on Monday morning.

The atmosphere of Opus Dei strove to mirror that of the home of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, as Escrivá described it in a meditation: "There you don't hear anyone talking about my honor, or my time, or my work, or my ideas, or my likes, or my money. There everything is placed at the service of God's great game with humanity that is the Redemption."

This spirit of cheerful, willing self-sacrifice to foster the apostolate of Opus Dei sprang from the conviction that they were indeed involved in a Work of God. Orlandis summarizes their attitude as one of "absolute faith in the supernatural character of Opus Dei."

This faith rested on the belief that God—our Father in heaven—intervenes in human history because he loves men and wants their well-being on earth and their eternal happiness in heaven. The Work was of God: a divine undertaking, an "imperative command of Christ." He had raised it up for the great good of all mankind, both now and until the end of time. Although the Work was still small, like a newborn child, it was for the entire world and for all times. This faith gave us full confidence that the Work would be carried out. It accounts for the serenity and optimism that characterized our lives and the centers of the Work, despite the obstacles and misunderstandings that seemed to us, who were still young men, mere unimportant anecdotes.

Closely related to their convictions about the Work was their attitude toward Escrivá. As Orlandis explains, they clearly understood that he was the founder, but he was not in their eyes someone who had had a good idea and set out to realize it. Rather, he was an instrument chosen by God to carry out Opus Dei. Escrivá often stressed this point in his dealings with the early members. He did so in dramatic fashion on October 1, 1940, when he called together the small group of people who would be making a life-long commitment to Opus Dei the next day and asked them, "If I should die tomorrow, what would you do?" Orlandis, who was one of the people involved, reports that they were "very impressed and not a little upset by the question," but they replied that if he were to die, they would continue the Work. Escrivá then commented, "Well, of course! What a poor deal it would be if you had come to follow this poor man instead of following Jesus Christ." This conviction that Opus Dei was in fact as well as in name a work of God helps explain the willingness of its members to sacrifice themselves to carry it out and the attraction their message had for many who heard it.

* * *

The growth of Opus Dei's activities with men in Madrid and in other parts of Spain in the years immediately following the civil war built on the foundations that had been laid during the previous decade. Opus Dei's apostolates with women were far less developed when the war began, and they did not survive the bitter trial of the war. With women, it was a question of starting over.

Restarting the Work with Women

❧ 1939–1943

The civil war cut off from Escrivá the few women who had joined Opus Dei before July 1936. Even in the rare cases in which he knew their whereabouts, he often had no easy way of contacting them and was reluctant to put them in further danger by making efforts to maintain contact with them. They had not yet fully grasped the spirit of the Work, especially its lay and secular character. With the exception of his *Spiritual Considerations*, the books available to them on spiritual life reflected the prevailing mentality, which saw the religious life as the only path for a woman who wanted to dedicate herself entirely to God. When they were fortunate enough to be able to find a priest who could hear their confessions and guide them spiritually, he would either downplay their quest for holiness or suggest that they strive to develop the spiritual life of a nun.

It was not surprising, therefore, that when Escrivá was reunited with them after the war, he found that their spirit was far removed from that of Opus Dei. Seeing that they had embraced a spiritual life based on renunciation of the world, he told them, with great sorrow, that they could not continue in Opus Dei. Almost ten years after its foundation, the women's branch of Opus Dei had only one member, Lola Fisac.

Lola Fisac joined Opus Dei in May 1937. She was living with her family in the little town of Daimiel in the south of Spain. Her brother, Miguel, had gone into hiding at home. He did not want to write to Escrivá or Zorzano for fear of attracting the attention of the Republican censors and possibly exposing his whereabouts, so he asked his sister to write on his behalf. In this way, Lola established contact with Escrivá by letter. Miguel explained Opus Dei to her and gave her a copy of *Spiritual Considerations*.

Lola's first note to Escrivá, written in April 1937, simply let him know that Miguel was safe. Escrivá's reply was equally brief and guarded, but it expressed his hope that someday she might become a member of his family. Despite the veiled language, Lola understood Escrivá's message and responded at the end of May 1937, in equally discreet language, that she wanted to join Opus Dei. Years later she recalled that, although she did not fully understand the vocation to Opus Dei, "it seemed enthralling, and I took the interior decision to live the call to the Work fully and without conditions." During the following months, Lola and Escrivá continued to correspond, although censorship forced them to be cryptic.

Within three weeks after returning to Madrid at the end of the war, Escrivá traveled to Daimiel to meet Lola and to thank her family for the food packages they had sent to Isidoro during the war. Escrivá offered Lola a detailed explanation of the vocation to Opus Dei during a lengthy conversation on April 20, 1939. She reiterated her desire to join Opus Dei, so Escrivá wrote out for her a plan of life that included a daily half hour of mental prayer, rosary, examination of conscience, and reading of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's *Story of a Soul*. Above all, he insisted on cultivating an awareness of God's presence by praying spiritual communions, by performing acts of love and reparation, and by dedicating each day to a particular devotion: Sunday, the Blessed Trinity; Monday, the Souls in Purgatory; Tuesday, the Guardian Angels; Wednesday, St. Joseph; Thursday, the Eucharist; Friday, the Passion; and Saturday, the Blessed Virgin.

Because Lola would be staying with her family in Daimiel for the foreseeable future, Escrivá also insisted on writing frequently and cultivating an awareness of the communion of the saints, through which Christians are united. The advice he gave her is reflected in *The Way*: "Live a special communion of saints, and, in the moments of interior struggle, just as in the hours of professional work, each of you will feel the joy and the strength of not being alone." And: "You will find it easier to do your duty if you think of how your brothers are helping you, and of the help you fail to give them if you are not faithful."

Lola traveled several times to Madrid during the following months. In addition to completing the business that brought her to the capital, she took advantage of the opportunities to see Escrivá, as well as his mother and his sister Carmen.

Escrivá had a special reason for wanting Lola to become better acquainted with his mother and sister and to spend time with them. In 1935, he had written that a center of Opus Dei “is not a convent, nor a school, nor a barracks, nor an asylum, nor a boardinghouse: it is family.” For that to be true, he foresaw that, in addition to carrying out the whole gamut of apostolic activities that the male members would eventually develop, the women of Opus Dei would exercise what he often described as the “apostolate of apostolates.” By that he meant administering the centers of Opus Dei to give them the tone and warmth of a Christian family home. Although neither his mother nor his sister ever belonged to the Work, Escrivá felt that the atmosphere they had created in his own home was an excellent example of the family spirit that should characterize the life of Opus Dei. Spending time with them, the women of Opus Dei would learn how to create that environment in the centers of the Work.

During the time Lola remained in Daimiel, Escrivá kept in touch with her by letter. In January 1940, he wrote: “Don’t forget that *God knows better than we do* and that, as the saying goes, he writes straight with crooked lines. If we are faithful, when least we expect it, everything will be fixed and ready.” In another letter, he encouraged her: “I hope that our Lord will soon set things up so that you can work in the way you want. You should always be content. Sadness is the enemy’s ally.” In response to a letter in which Lola complained of interior dryness, he said, “Don’t worry about being cold and dry. The important thing is perseverance in our plan of life, even though we have to drag ourselves along.”

Work with Women in Madrid

In Madrid, Escrivá tried to find young women who might have a vocation to Opus Dei. Specifically, he searched for those women

who could answer God's call to a life of apostolic celibacy and dedicate all of their energies to spreading Opus Dei. He heard confessions regularly in a number of parishes. In addition, he asked the members of the Work and some of the young men who were in contact with its apostolates to pray for their sisters. He urged them to facilitate their contact with Opus Dei by giving the young women a copy of *The Way* or by suggesting that they go to Escrivá for confession. When the residents of Jenner were away on vacation, he organized meditations for young women in the residence oratory.

By fall of 1940, there was a sizeable nucleus of young women in contact with Opus Dei in Madrid, six of whom had asked to be admitted as members of the Work. Escrivá urged them to sanctify their studies and the other professional activities in which they found themselves involved. Additionally, he asked some of them to help his mother and sister oversee the cooking and housekeeping in the Jenner residence and in the two new men's centers. Women of Opus Dei were certainly not called to limit themselves to domestic tasks, but Escrivá stressed that these duties could be sanctified as well as any other professional work. He also emphasized that by creating a pleasant family atmosphere in the centers of the Work, they would contribute greatly to the apostolate done there.

In November 1940, the women who had joined Opus Dei in Madrid rented an apartment on Castelló Street. None of them lived there. They simply used it as a base for activities. After a few months, however, the women's activities moved to the part of the center on Diego de Leon Street where Escrivá's mother and sister were living. This facilitated interaction with the Escrivás and enabled the women to work with Carmen regarding administration of the centers.

Valencia

Encarnación Ortega was sufficiently impressed with *The Way* that she attended a retreat preached by Escrivá at the end of March 1941 in Alacuás, near her native city of Valencia. After the first

mediation, she went to greet the preacher and author, who immediately explained Opus Dei to her and told her that he needed some valiant women to carry it out. "It was quite a shock," she recalls. "I lost my appetite and couldn't sleep. I wanted to think that the retreat would soon be over, and that I might never meet that priest again; but the divine plans he had just revealed to me were pounding in my head."

The final meditation of the retreat was on Christ's passion. "Christ suffered all this, all of it, for you," Escrivá said at the end of the meditation. "There he is in the tabernacle. Have the courage, at least, to look him in the eye and say to him, 'I don't want to give you what you are asking of me.'"

No sooner had the meditation finished than someone tapped Ortega on the shoulder and said, "Don Josemaría would like to see you." "At that moment," says Ortega, "I decided to say yes, that I was ready to be one of those women who, very close to our Sorrowful Mother, could help the Father carry out Opus Dei on this earth."

When she told Escrivá about her decision, he pointed out the obstacles that awaited her. His daughters still did not have a center where they could live together as a family. People might not understand their way. They were called to live real poverty and to forsake not only what they already had, but what they had dreamed of for the future. Ortega was not discouraged by this panorama, but the next morning she felt obliged to tell Escrivá, "I don't know how to do anything." Escrivá responded with the question, "Do you know how to obey?"

During Escrivá's stay in Valencia, Enrica Botella also joined Opus Dei. Her vocation had been maturing for some months. Her brother, Paco, had introduced her and one of their cousins to Escrivá. At their first meeting, Escrivá had asked them to make vestments and other linens for the oratory of the center in Valencia, but he did not talk to them about vocation to Opus Dei. "He got us enthused with the task," Enrica recalls, "commenting that caring properly for our Lord's things is a real sign of love. We could contribute to this if we sewed with affection, and in the presence of God, those items that would be so close to Jesus in the

Blessed Sacrament. 'Make an act of love with each stitch,' he said."

A few weeks later, during a trip to Valencia, Enrica's brother had explained Opus Dei to her. "Why are you telling me about this?" she asked. When he said that women could also belong to Opus Dei, she responded that she was happy to help out by sewing but had no interest in joining the Work. During the following weeks, however, she continued to think about what her brother had told her, and when Escrivá came to Valencia to preach the retreat, she went to see him. "I am praying for your vocation, my daughter," he told her. "From that moment on," she says, "I considered myself part of the family." Escrivá wrote out for her a plan of life and made an appointment to meet with her again a few days later.

At their next meeting, Escrivá introduced Enrica to Ortega and presented them with the vast panorama of apostolic activities that the women of Opus Dei would undertake. Women members of Opus Dei, he told them, would sanctify themselves and carry out a personal apostolate of friendship and confidence with their friends and colleagues in all walks of life, from the most prestigious to the most humble. Some would be university professors, doctors, journalists, lawyers, and pharmacists. Others would be shop clerks, practical nurses, and maids. In addition to this individual activity, which is the principal apostolate of all members of the Work, the women of Opus Dei would collaborate with many other people to create a wide variety of educational and social organizations, ranging from universities and high schools to rural clinics, schools for workers, and university residences.

Those aspirations contrasted sharply with the reality of the moment in Valencia. The women of Opus Dei did not have even a small apartment in which to carry on activities. For the time being, in addition to their personal apostolate with friends and relatives, he asked them to make some vestments and altar linens, to give classes to the housekeeping staff of the small residence on Samaniego Street, and to help plan the menus for the residence. These humble tasks, he said, would help them prepare their souls

for the great undertakings awaiting them. He elaborated by reading a point from *The Way* we have quoted earlier:

The plants lay hidden under the snow. And the farmer, the owner of the land, observed with satisfaction: "Now they are growing on the inside."

I thought of you: of your forced inactivity. . . .

Tell me: are you too growing "on the inside"?

So great was the faith and assurance with which Escrivá spoke about their future, that Enrica Botella and Ortega hardly noticed the contrast between those great dreams and the limited, traditionally feminine responsibilities he had asked them to assume. "We left radiant," Botella writes. "Valencia seemed small for our vast dreams. . . . It didn't matter that we still couldn't see anything of the women's branch of Opus Dei. Our founder's security was enough."

Ortega had never done much sewing and was not very good at it. In the women's prison where she was held during the civil war, she had preferred digging ditches, uprooting trees, and loading trucks to working in the tailor shop. Clearly her tastes and goals did not mesh with the roles assigned to women in post-civil-war Spain. Nonetheless, she enthusiastically embraced not only the long-range goals Escrivá had described but the more mundane realities of the beginnings. She wrote to other members of the Work, "I'm ready, if God wants me to sew, to spend the day seated in a chair with a needle in my hand. If I don't enjoy it much, so much the better, because it will give me something to offer up, and I certainly plan to do it cheerfully."

León

Another woman joined Opus Dei during the summer of 1941 in the city of León, in the north of Spain. Her first contact with Opus Dei had occurred in August 1940, when the bishop of León invited Escrivá to give a retreat to priests of his diocese. While Escrivá was there, a friend, Fr. Eliodoro Gil Rivera, had introduced him

to Nisa González Guzman, who often went by “Guzman.” She lived with her parents and divided her time between studying foreign languages and playing sports. She especially enjoyed tennis and downhill skiing, for which she had recently won a trophy.

She was surprised when, immediately after greeting her, Escrivá asked her, “My daughter, do you love our Lord a lot?” Guzman comments:

No one had ever asked me that with such simplicity and clarity. I had great desires to do God’s will, and knew that that was how we show him our love. But I also knew that it was demanding, and for the moment it seemed to me I didn’t have enough strength. For that reason, I was somewhat disconcerted and answered with a doubtful gesture.

Despite her unenthusiastic initial response, Escrivá told her about Opus Dei. He painted a picture of women sanctifying themselves and carrying out apostolate in various professional and social settings. Although he did not directly speak to her about vocation, Escrivá encouraged her to come closer to God in her daily life. During the following months, Guzman thought often about her conversation with Escrivá, and in April 1941, she traveled to Madrid with the intention of joining Opus Dei. Escrivá, however, suggested that she attend a retreat and continue to think and pray about her decision.

Before she had an opportunity to attend a retreat, Guzman joined Opus Dei. Shortly thereafter, she attended a study week for members of the Work and other young women who were about to join. Like the activities organized for men in 1941, this study week was the precursor of many workshops and courses that would eventually be organized for the formation of Opus Dei members. It was held in Lagasca, while the residents were away. It began with a day of recollection preached by Escrivá. During the rest of the week, Escrivá gave a series of classes and informal talks on Catholic doctrine and on the spirit of Opus Dei. In Guzman’s words, he “put before our eyes the boundless sea that is Opus Dei, with a faith that made us touch the future.” In the meditations he

preached to them, he often returned to the passage of the Gospel in which Christ prayed that his apostles might “go and bear fruit” (Jn 16: 15). When the study week ended, Guzman returned to León. She continued to live with her family until July 1942, when she moved to the long-awaited center of the women’s branch in Madrid.

Death of Escrivá’s Mother

Escrivá’s mother, whom the members of the Work affectionately referred to as “Grandmother,” fell ill with pneumonia in April of 1941. Escrivá was scheduled to give a retreat to diocesan priests in the diocese of Lerida, near Barcelona, but he was reluctant to leave Madrid. “The Grandmother seems to me quite ill,” he told one of the members of the Work. The doctor assured him, however, that there was no immediate reason for concern, so he concluded that “there are fifty priests waiting for me and my obligation is to take care of them.” Before leaving he said goodbye to his mother and asked her to offer her discomfort for the priests to whom he would be preaching. She quietly muttered, “What a son I’ve raised!”

A day later, Doña Dolores took a turn for the worse, and on the morning of April 22, 1941, she died. As soon as he received word of her death, Escrivá left for Madrid in a borrowed car. The car broke down on the way, and he did not reach Madrid until the morning of the following day. Before her coffin he sobbed uncontrollably, according to Orlandis, like a small child who has just lost his mother. “My God, my God,” he prayed aloud, “what have you done? You are taking everything away from me. Everything you are taking away. I thought that my daughters badly needed my mother, and you leave me with nothing, nothing!”

The First Women’s Center

There were few positive external developments in the apostolate of Opus Dei women from the end of the study week in August 1941 until the following summer. As had occurred in the early

years of the apostolate with men, young women grew enthusiastic and even expressed their interest in joining Opus Dei. After a time, however, confronted with the reality of the sacrifices required from members of Opus Dei, they lost their enthusiasm and gradually drifted away. Of the women who had joined Opus Dei by 1942, the only ones whom Escrivá would ultimately rely on were Ortega and Botella in Valencia, Guzman in León, and Fisac in Daimiel.

Despite the difficulties of building a solid foundation for Opus Dei's apostolate with women, the search for a house or apartment that could serve as the first center of the women's branch began early in 1942. Madrid had suffered considerable damage during the civil war, resulting in a serious housing shortage. Nonetheless, a suitable two-story house on Jorge Manrique Street was eventually discovered in June 1942. By mid-July, Ortega and Guzman had moved in, although they hardly had any furniture. During the first few days, Carmen Escrivá stopped by frequently to help them get settled.

On his return from two retreats that he preached for priests in Segovia, Escrivá visited the new center. He stressed the need to be strong and valiant, as well as loving and affectionate toward members of the Work. Their prayers and other acts of piety should always be heartfelt, he told them.

Several months later, Escrivá showed the residents of the center a long list of some of the apostolic activities he expected women of Opus Dei to undertake in the future. These activities would be in addition to the household administration of the centers of the Work and their personal apostolate of friendship and confidence with friends and colleagues. "There are two possible reactions to all this," he said. "One to think that it is very beautiful, but an unattainable fantasy. The other, confidence in our Lord. If he asks us for all this, then he will help us to carry it out. I hope your reaction will be the second."

The handful of women who belonged to Opus Dei at the time had very little to show for their dedication, but they shared Escrivá's faith that God wanted Opus Dei to develop as Escrivá envisioned it. Their faith and their spirit of sacrifice formed the

basis for the growth of Opus Dei's apostolic activities with women in the years that followed.

* * *

The rebirth of Opus Dei's apostolic activities with women and the growth and expansion of its apostolates with men in the years following the civil war occurred amid criticism and opposition that came both from enemies of the Church and from within the Church itself. In many ways, "the opposition of good people," as Escrivá called the criticism, was a more bitter trial than those Opus Dei had undergone during the civil war.

Opposition and New Developments

1940–1943

Pope Paul VI once observed, “The saints are always a challenge to the conformist routines we frequently consider prudent simply because they are comfortable.” Innovative church institutions and their founders, even the most saintly, have often suffered criticism and opposition not only from enemies of the Church but also from their fellow Catholics. The founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola, was repeatedly hauled before the Inquisition and twice held in its prisons. The pope’s representative in Spain described the reformer of the Carmelite Order, St. Theresa of Avila, as a “restless, roving, disobedient, and obstinate woman.” She suffered so many attacks and efforts to discredit her that she told a friend, “You would be astonished that people could invent so many malicious things.” The founder of the Salesians, Don Bosco, was disparaged by priests of his time as a revolutionary, a madman, and a heretic. Opus Dei and its founder were no exception to this pattern.

Even prior to the civil war, Escrivá had been the object of criticism, especially in a few clerical circles in Madrid. The growth of Opus Dei in the early 1940s and the intolerant atmosphere that characterized post-civil-war Spain intensified the attacks. Criticism came from three groups: some members of the official political organization, the Falange, who disliked Opus Dei’s emphasis on the freedom of Catholics in political matters; a number of university professors, who opposed the presence of fervent Catholics in the university; and some priests and members of religious orders, who were alarmed by the novelty of Opus Dei’s message or resented its activities in areas of the Church that they considered their exclusive domain.

Falangist Opposition

Like the National Socialist party in Germany and the Fascist party in Italy, the state-sponsored Falange dominated political life in Spain after the civil war. It was the only legal political party, and it controlled the only labor organization and the only student organization permitted in the country. Like many other Spaniards, some members of Opus Dei belonged to the Falange or to its student organization, but others refused to join.

Escrivá made clear to Opus Dei members that they enjoyed full autonomy in political matters. As loyal members of the Catholic Church, they would be obliged to heed official directives issued by the hierarchy in response to a political situation that threatened spiritual values. But Opus Dei would give them no political directives. Even though some bishops were enthusiastic supporters of the Falange, the hierarchy had not officially directed all Catholics to support this organization. Members of the Work, therefore, enjoyed complete freedom in choosing whether or not to join it.

Opus Dei encouraged its members and other participants in its apostolic activities to take seriously their civic responsibilities but did not attempt to dictate their choices. Therefore, when a student who lived at the Jenner residence proposed that the director of the residence organize a recruiting campaign for the Falangist student organization, the director politely refused, stressing that the residence respected the political freedom of the residents.

Individual members of Opus Dei took advantage of this autonomy by manifesting their political opinions, and some became politically active. One young member of Opus Dei in Barcelona, Juan Bautista Torelló, belonged to an association for the defense of Catalan culture, which the police considered a clandestine anti-franquist group. He mentioned this to Escrivá, who insisted that in political and cultural matters, the members of Opus Dei were free to make their own decisions. Escrivá told him that no director of the Work would ask any member, or anyone else involved in Opus Dei's apostolates, about his political opinions, much less try to influence them. Escrivá suggested that he try to avoid being

arrested, because the Work had only six members in Barcelona and it would be a blow to its apostolate for one of them to be in jail. But, he concluded, "You are free to do whatever you think best."

As head of Opus Dei and as a priest, Escrivá was careful not to reveal his personal political opinions. In the years immediately following the war, when the national anthem was played at official ceremonies, virtually everyone—including many bishops and priests—gave the fascist raised-arm salute that had been adopted by the Falange and the Franco regime. Escrivá did not do so, not as an act of opposition, but because he did not want to be identified with any political group. Thus, he could avoid influencing the members of the Work and alienating those who wanted spiritual guidance from him but might not share his political opinions.

Additionally, Escrivá did not hesitate to associate with people whose political views were unpopular. The widow of a man who had been jailed because he was suspected of being a Mason wrote to Escrivá to express her gratitude for the friendship and attention he had given her husband at a time when "no one, not even our closest friends, dared show their affection for him."

This respect for freedom in political matters sat ill with some Falangists, who saw any group that was not under their direct control as a threat to their totalitarian aspirations. The Falangist magazine *Que Pasa?* and other Falangist periodicals began publishing crude attacks on the Work and its founder, which the official censors of the Franco regime allowed.

One day, someone who worked in the general secretariat of the Falange gave to Fr. José López Ortiz, an Augustinian priest and a good friend of Escrivá, an official "Report on the Secret Organization Opus Dei," prepared by the information section of the Falange. In addition to characterizing Opus Dei as a clandestine organization, the report attacked it for its supposed internationalism and its opposition to the nation, to patriotism, and to the ideas of the Franco regime. It also accused Opus Dei of being opposed to the Falange and of making sectarian efforts to control the university. Fr. López, who describes the document as "atrocious slan-

der," reports that he was unable to contain his tears as Escrivá read it. To Fr. López's amazement, when Escrivá looked up, he burst out laughing and told him, "Don't worry. Thanks be to God, everything this document says is false. But if the authors knew me better, they could truly say much worse things, because I am nothing more than a poor sinner who madly loves Jesus Christ." Rather than tearing up the calumnious document, Escrivá gave it back to Fr. López so the person who had taken it could return it to the files without repercussion.

The opposition of certain Falangists extended beyond slanderous reports. One morning two men followed Fr. Mariano Gayar Boquedano, a Piarist priest, as he returned home from saying Mass in the Opus Dei center on Lagasca Street. When he asked them what they wanted, they told him that they were policemen assigned to watch the center. They were to prepare a report on its activities, because it was suspected of being affiliated with the Masons.

Falangists also denounced Opus Dei to the special tribunal for the suppression of Masonry and Communism, accusing it of being "a Jewish branch of the Masons" or a "Jewish sect related to the Masons." Since members of Opus Dei did not wear distinctive medals or lapel pins and did not advertise their membership, the accusers concluded that it was a "secret society." And, since they saw the Masonry as the archetype of secret societies, they concluded the Work must be related to it. The Jewish connection apparently rested on the similarity drawn—more or less in jest—by a professor between the acronym SOCCOIM, used by the Society of Intellectual Collaboration, and a purported ancient Jewish group of assassins called Socoim.

While the accusation that Opus Dei was a Jewish branch of the Masons may seem laughable today, in post-civil-war Spain it was a very serious matter. To the victorious Nationalists who governed the country, Masons and Communists epitomized everything they had fought against in the war, and they were determined to eradicate all remaining traces of their influence in the country.

The tribunal for the suppression of Masonry and Communism had broad powers and was subject to few restraints. Accusations

did not have to be well founded to be taken seriously. Escrivá confided to a Dominican priest, Fr. Silvestre Sancho Morales, that the day he learned of the accusations was the worst day of his life. Early in the proceedings, however, someone mentioned that the members of Opus Dei were celibate. General Saliquet, the president of the tribunal, asked if they really lived chastity. When he heard that they did, he put an end to the proceedings saying, "If they are chaste, they are not Masons." Although the closing of tribunal proceedings was welcome, it did not end Falangist criticism and opposition, which continued unabated for many years.

Opposition in the University

Although Opus Dei's message was directed to men and women of every social class and profession, and Escrivá's earliest efforts had been directed to a broad spectrum of people, in the early 1930s he decided to focus his attention for the moment on college students and recent graduates. He intended to build a solid base of followers among people whose educational background would enable them to spread Opus Dei's message to people in all social strata.

Consequently, in the early 1940s, Opus Dei's members were mostly college-educated people and students. Escrivá encouraged the minority of them who showed talent for research and teaching to consider becoming university professors. Like journalists, professors enjoyed a privileged opportunity to shape the thought of their society, bringing the light of Christ's teaching to the entire culture.

All Spanish universities were state-sponsored, and professorships were filled through nationwide competitions in which anyone with the minimum academic credentials could enter. Tribunals comprised of professors appointed by the Ministry of Education chose among the candidates on the basis of their publications, résumés, and performance in a series of written and oral exercises.

With few exceptions, the members of the Work were so young that under normal circumstances it would have been many years

before they could realistically have hoped to obtain a professorship. The years immediately following the civil war, however, presented young academics with exceptional opportunities. Many professors had left Spain during the civil war, and some of those who remained had been removed by the government from their positions, leaving an unusually large number of professorships vacant. Some Opus Dei members took advantage of these opportunities.

This led to accusations that Opus Dei was attempting to take over the university with the support of Albareda, who had recently been named head of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Higher Council for Scientific Research), and Ibáñez Martín, the minister of education and a member of the ACNP (Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas), who was a friend to a number of members of Opus Dei, although he himself was not a member.

At the time that the accusations began, the only member of Opus Dei who held a professorship was Albareda. During the five years between 1940 and 1945, eleven members of Opus Dei were awarded university professorships. They accounted for approximately six percent of the new appointments and a much smaller percentage of the total number of professors. Though significant, their presence could hardly be considered a "take-over" of the university, especially because they did not ban together or receive directives from Opus Dei about how to carry out their work. By contrast, during the same period, members of the ACNP won thirty percent of the professorships awarded in law schools and fifteen percent of the professorships awarded in all other schools.

Fr. José López Ortiz, who was a professor of legal history and who would later be ordained bishop, was a member of several tribunals that awarded professorships in the early 1940s, including those in which members of Opus Dei were among the competitors. He attributes the accusations against Opus Dei and its members to three factors: the opposition of some academics to the presence on the faculty of committed Catholics, the rivalries between different schools of thought and between factions within the

university, and the tendency of some who lost in the competitions to attribute their failure to dark machinations rather than to having been outperformed. He testifies that "neither the Father [Escrivá], nor the doctrine that derives from Opus Dei's spirituality, nor the practice of its members is open to any criticism in this area." Like the accusations launched by Falangists, however, the charge that Opus Dei was trying to take over the university would die hard.

Opposition from Other Catholics

By far the most serious and troubling opposition to Opus Dei did not come from the world of politics or academia but from within the Church herself. The leading figure in the ecclesiastical campaign against Opus Dei was a well-known religious. He was joined by members of some religious orders as well as by some diocesan priests and pious lay people. Certainly not all priests or religious were critical of Opus Dei; in fact, many warmly supported it. The critics were, however, sufficiently powerful that one university professor predicted that the opposition would succeed in killing Opus Dei. Influenced by St. Theresa of Avila, Escrivá called the campaign waged by Catholics against Opus Dei "the opposition of good people." He assumed that the critics acted, as Christ predicted would happen, "thinking they are offering a service to God" (Jn 16: 2).

In a September 1941 letter, the bishop of Madrid summarized the assault on Opus Dei from within the Church. The critics claimed Opus Dei was "Masonic, a heretical sect . . . , a den of iniquity where souls are lost without remedy; and its members, iconoclasts and hypnotized, persecutors of the Church and critics of the religious state." In sacristies, confessionals, and pulpits, priests warned about this great danger to the Church. They predicted it would soon be condemned by Rome. In one novitiate, Escrivá was presented as the anti-Christ, and in Barcelona his book *The Way* was thrown on the bonfire in an *auto de fe* reminiscent of the Inquisition. The preacher at a public Mass organized by a Marian congregation to which a number of members of

Opus Dei belonged identified them from the pulpit as members of a dangerous sect, expelled them from the association, and forced them to leave in the middle of the service.

Religious critics did all in their power to persuade the civil authorities to close Opus Dei's centers and to put its founder in jail. They succeeded in convincing the civil governor of Barcelona to issue an order for Escrivá's arrest if he were found in the city. The situation became so grave that the papal nuncio advised Escrivá to travel incognito if he went to Barcelona.

Simultaneously, the critics were trying to convince Church authorities to take action against Opus Dei. Two members of a religious order visited the bishop of Santiago and gave him a document that purported to prove that the bishop of Madrid had forbidden Escrivá to say Mass or to hear confessions. In Madrid's ecclesiastical circles, rumors circulated that Escrivá had been officially denounced to the Holy Office. In fact, no formal denunciation was ever registered in the Holy Office, but informal efforts were made to have Escrivá condemned by Rome.

Most painful and damaging to Opus Dei were the visits that a number of priests and religious made to the homes of young people who had joined the Work or were thinking of joining. They warned parents that their son or daughter had joined a heretical group and was in great danger of losing his or her eternal soul. Del Portillo's mother received a number of anonymous letters, followed by a visit from a member of a religious order warning her about the grave spiritual danger her son was in. Fortunately, she was well acquainted with Escrivá and knew that what her visitor said was false. Many other families, however, were deeply shaken by these allegations. In some cases, they threatened to expel their sons or daughters from their homes if they did not break off their relationships with Opus Dei.

The opposition primarily criticized Opus Dei's message about the universal call to holiness and the possibility of sanctifying oneself in the middle of the world without becoming a priest or joining a religious order. The critics viewed this as a dangerous novelty, contrary to the belief and practice of the Church, that would steal vocations from the priesthood and religious orders.

These allegations reached the ears of the papal nuncio to Spain, who asked for an explanation from Opus Dei. In Escrivá's absence, del Portillo went to meet with him. "How dare you," the nuncio demanded angrily, "steal vocations and destroy seminaries and novitiates?" Del Portillo responded calmly, "We are all professional men. We earn our living working and have plenty of money in our pockets. Let me tell you that there are more enjoyable ways to lose one's soul." The common sense of this response disarmed the nuncio. Once he learned more about Opus Dei, the nuncio became one of its warmest supporters.

It is ironic that Opus Dei was accused of taking vocations away from the seminaries and religious orders. The vast majority of the young men and women who joined Opus Dei in the 1940s had never thought about becoming a priest or religious. Prior to their encounter with Opus Dei, some took their religion seriously, but many did not. Only a handful had ever considered dedicating themselves to God.

On the other hand, a number of young men and women who began to live a more intense spiritual life because of Opus Dei ultimately were called to the priesthood or the religious life. Escrivá helped steer toward religious orders a number of people who asked him for spiritual direction. On one occasion, a young woman came to the Opus Dei center on Lagasca Street and explained that she felt called to a particular convent but lacked the necessary dowry. After assuring himself that she was sincere in her desire to enter religious life, Escrivá gave her all the money in the center's cash box.

Accusations against Opus Dei were not limited to the charge that it was stealing vocations from the seminaries and religious orders. Many of the allegations were so extravagant that it is hard to see how they could have been taken seriously, but in the superheated religious and political atmosphere of post-civil-war Spain, some people were prepared to believe anything.

In the small Opus Dei center in Barcelona, there was a large black wooden cross with no figure of Christ crucified. Rumor had it that it was used for bloody religious rites in which the members of Opus Dei crucified themselves. To stop the rumors, the mem-

bers of the Work replaced it with a smaller cross that was too little to crucify anyone on. In Madrid, several members of a Catholic youth group went to the Jenner residence to discover the “secrets” of the “heretical group with Masonic connections” that ran the residence. They reported finding in the oratory words in an unknown foreign language and mysterious magical symbols of Jewish origin. What they had in fact observed were some verses of a well-known Eucharistic hymn in Latin and traditional Christian symbols of the Eucharist: a basket of bread, a shock of wheat, and a bunch of grapes.

Reaction to Persecution

Escrivá believed God’s providence was behind this persecution of Opus Dei, which the archbishop of Madrid described as “most cruel.” If God permitted him and his sons and daughters to suffer unjust attacks, it was to fortify them and to strengthen their faith. This conviction permitted him to retain his peace and joy even in the midst of bitter suffering.

People who knew Escrivá at the time were astounded at his ability to rise above the difficulties. The future cardinal archbishop of Seville, José María Bueno Monreal, who was a close friend of Escrivá, recalls:

I never saw him worried nor noticed that he was passing through difficult moments. Undoubtedly his faith in God, his hope in the help of his Father God, and consequently his joy and humor, permitted him to keep his peace and to spread to others his enormous confidence that what God wanted would be fulfilled; that everything was for the good.

Similarly, the future archbishop of Zaragoza, Pedro Cantero Cuadrado, another close friend, recalls Escrivá’s telling him:

The things they are saying are completely slanderous, but if God permits it, he knows why he does so. Never doubt, good things will come out of all of this. And when God wants, the

truth will emerge. . . . Don't worry. The Work is God's and since he is determined to have it go forward, it will.

The secret of Escrivá's cheerfulness was the strong sense of being a child of God that lay at the base of Opus Dei's spirit. "You have made me understand, Lord," he prayed aloud one day in a meditation, "that to have the Cross is to find happiness and joy. And the reason, I see it now more clearly than ever, is this: to have the Cross is to identify oneself with Christ, to be Christ, and, therefore, to be a son of God."

Escrivá's success in maintaining his peace and joy in the midst of what he described as "intrigues and incomprehensible calumnies that were often brutal," does not mean that he found them easy to bear. One night, unable to sleep, he went to the oratory of the Lagasca center where he was living, knelt before the tabernacle, and offered to our Lord present in the Eucharist one of the things an upright man holds most precious. "Lord," he prayed from the depths of his soul, "if you don't need my honor, what do I want it for?"

The most revealing account of Escrivá's interior struggles in the midst of these persecutions is found in a letter to del Portillo dated September 9, 1941. On that day, God momentarily took away from him at least partially—as he had done once before in the early thirties—his conviction that the Work was God's and therefore would overcome all obstacles. He wrote to del Portillo describing what happened and his own reaction:

Today I offered the Holy Sacrifice and the whole day for the sovereign pontiff, and his intentions. . . . After the Consecration I felt an interior impulse (though I was at the same time quite certain that the Work is to be much loved by the pope) to do something that cost me tears. With tears that burned my eyes, I looked at Jesus in the Host on the corporal, and in my heart I said to him, really and truly, "Lord, if you want me to, I will accept the injustice." You surely understand what I meant by "the injustice": the destruction of the entire Work of God.

I know that I pleased him. How could I have refused to make this act of union with his will, if he was asking me for it? Already once before, in 1933 or 1934, I did the same, and he alone knows how much I suffered.

Despite the agony of this moment of interior darkness, Escrivá retained his conviction that God would make use of Opus Dei to bring many people closer to himself. He continued pouring out his soul to del Portillo:

My son, what a beautiful harvest our Lord is getting ready to give us, once our Holy Father knows us as we really are and not through misrepresentations; once he recognizes us for what we are—most faithful servants of his—and blesses us!

I feel like shouting out, with not a care as to what others might say, the words which sometimes do escape my lips when I preach the meditation for you: “Ah, Jesus, what a field of wheat!”

The letter ends with another passage that reveals the effort it cost Escrivá to retain his peace and joy in the midst of these trials:

Alvaro, pray a lot, and get others to pray a lot, for your Father. Jesus is allowing the enemy to make me aware of the exorbitant enormity of this campaign of incredible falsehoods and crazy distortions; and the *animalis homo* [animal man (1 Cor 2: 14)] instinctively rebels. By the grace of God I constantly reject the natural reactions which seem to come, and perhaps do, from a sense of uprightness and justice. I let pour out of me a *fiat* [let it be done] that is joyous and filial (filial because of my divine filiation: I am a son of God!). A *fiat* that fills me with peace, and happiness, and makes it possible to forget.

In the face of criticism and misunderstanding, Escrivá advised the members of the Work to pray, to be silent, to work, and to smile. At one point, he even forbade them to talk among

themselves about the persecution they were undergoing, lest they lack charity toward their persecutors. The director of the center in Barcelona, where the campaign was especially vicious, and the members of the Work, only a handful of young men, wrote back, "Father, you can rest easy. Here we have not lacked charity even in our thoughts."

Talking with del Portillo one day, the archbishop of Madrid expressed his fear that the attacks on the Work might lead to anger and rancor, especially in its younger members. Del Portillo told him that he didn't have to worry about that. "We see this as something that God permits to make us better through sacrifice. We are happy, because when a good surgeon wants to carry out a good operation, he chooses a good instrument. In this case, our Lord has wanted to use a platinum scalpel."

Support from the Bishop of Madrid

In the midst of these trials, Opus Dei received strong, unwavering support from the archbishop of Madrid, Bishop Leopoldo Eijo y Garay. On a solemn public occasion, at the close of an ordination in the chapel of the seminary of Madrid, he declared, "Opus Dei is a work approved and blessed by the hierarchy, and I will not tolerate people's speaking against it."

The abbot of Montserrat, a Benedictine monastery outside Barcelona that enjoyed great prestige and influence in the entire area, wrote to Bishop Eijo y Garay about the rumors he had heard regarding Opus Dei and requested information. Eijo y Garay responded:

I know everything about the Opus. From the time it was founded in 1928, it has been so much in the hands of the Church that . . . either the vicar general or myself knows and, when necessary, directs all of its steps. . . . Believe me, Most Reverend Father, the Opus [Work] is truly Dei [of God], from its first conception and in all of its steps and works. . . . Nevertheless, it is good people who attack it. It would be a cause for amazement, if our Lord had not already made us

accustomed to see this same thing happen in many other works of his.

In another letter to the abbot, dated June 21, 1941, Eijo y Garay addressed the accusation that Opus Dei members were opposed to religious orders and congregations:

It is one of the greatest calumnies against Opus Dei. I can guarantee you, Most Reverend Father, that it is pure calumny. How could they love the holy Church without loving also the religious state? They do love it, and they venerate and proclaim it as a means of salvation for those God calls to it. They do not, however, feel called to this vocation, but rather to that of sanctifying themselves in the middle of the world and exercising their apostolate in the world. This is what they feel; and this is what they say, without implying in any way the slightest disrespect for the religious state. . . . They believe that, called to this kind of apostolate, if they are faithful, they will give more glory to God than if they were to turn a deaf ear to this vocation and were to become religious.

On September 1, 1941, Bishop Eijo y Garay answered two letters in which the abbot had spoken about the growing intensity of the campaign against Opus Dei. Opus Dei, he said, "goes ahead because it walks united to the bishops, holding tightly to their hand and with no other desire than that of obeying them and of serving the Church. Their motto and password and the order of every day is *Serviam!* [I will serve]." In the same letter, he described Escrivá as

a model priest, chosen by God for the sanctification of many souls, humble, prudent, self-sacrificing, extremely obedient to his prelate, outstanding in intellect, of very solid doctrinal and spiritual formation, ardently zealous, an apostle of the Christian formation of young students. He has no other end or desire in mind than that of preparing for the service of our country and the service and defense of the Church a large

number of intellectuals and professionals, who in the middle of the world are not only a leaven of holiness of life but also work with the soul of apostles.

Turning his attention from Escrivá to Opus Dei, he added:

He has poured out his Opus in the mold of his spirit. I know it, not by reference of others, but by my personal experience. The men of Opus Dei (I emphasize the word men, because among them even the young ones are men thanks to their recollection and the seriousness of their life) are traveling a safe way not only for the salvation of their souls but also to do great good to countless other souls.

In addition to using the weight of his office to defend Opus Dei from its detractors, Bishop Eijo y Garay gave Escrivá and the other members of the Work warm personal support and friendship. Many years later, Escrivá recalled with gratitude and emotion one manifestation of this friendship:

One night when I had gone to bed and was just falling to sleep . . . the telephone rang. I picked it up and heard, "Josemaría." It was Don Leopoldo. . . . He had a very warm voice. He had often called me before at that time of the night, because he went to bed late, after midnight, and celebrated Mass at 11 A.M.

"Yes?" I responded. And he said, "'*Ecce Satanas expetivit vos, ut cribaret sicut triticum.*' [Behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat (Lk 22:31)]. He will stir you up and sift you, as wheat is winnowed to sift it." Then he added, "I pray so much for all of you. . . . '*Et tu . . . confirma filios tuos!*' [You, confirm your sons (Lk 22:32)]."

After the death of the cardinal of Toledo, who was the primate of Spain, it occurred to Escrivá that Bishop Eijo y Garay's defense of Opus Dei might hurt the latter's chances of becoming the next primate. He said to him, "Your Excellency, don't defend me any-

more; abandon my cause. By defending
ting at risk the miter of Toledo." Eijo y Ga
what is at stake is not the miter of Tole
abandon neither you nor Opus Dei."

Years later, Eijo y Garay told a member
prayer before the tabernacle, he often said
not worth much, when I arrive before you at
you, 'Opus Dei was born in these hands, and
Josemaría.' I hope these will be my creden
myself before God's judgment."

Opus Dei
and sim"
Cancⁿ pre-
th.

First Approval of Opus Dei

Eijo y Garay realized that his public declarations of support were not sufficient to calm the criticism of Opus Dei, so he decided to grant it official written approval. He informed Escrivá of his decision in March 1940 and asked him to present the request for approval with the necessary documentation. A young Catholic organization under attack would normally have rushed to receive the bishop's official written approval. Opus Dei did not.

The reason for delaying in responding to Eijo y Garay's offer was that the archbishop could not approve Opus Dei without categorizing it within existing canon law. None of the available categories reflected the reality of Opus Dei as Escrivá had seen it on October 2, 1928, and as it had subsequently developed. Many people might have rationalized that it did not really matter what category Opus Dei was put in as long as it was approved. As a lawyer, however, Escrivá was aware that if the legal framework that governs an entity does not reflect its living reality, the law can easily suffocate the life it is supposed to channel.

Had it not been for the need to quiet critics and to obey his bishop, Escrivá would have preferred to wait until he could obtain approval from the Holy See under some new form of legislation that fit Opus Dei. Since that was not possible, he had to chose the least objectionable available alternative. At the time, the Code of Canon Law offered two major categories: (1) religious orders, congregations, and similar institutions, and (2) associations of the faithful.

number clearly did not fit into the category of religious orders of the same institutions. That left associations of the faithful. Canon law delineated three types of associations of the faithful: religious orders, confraternities and sodalities, and pious unions. Opus Dei could not be a third order, because they must be "under the direction of some order and in conformity with its spirit." Neither was it a confraternity or sodality "erected for the embellishment of public worship." That left only pious unions, "for the practice of certain works of piety or charity."

Existing pious unions, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society or the Holy Name Society, did not involve a divine vocation or a life-embracing personal commitment. None of them had priests who had been ordained for their service. They also did not have a well-defined spirituality or offer their members comprehensive spiritual and doctrinal formation. Nonetheless, despite the profound differences between Opus Dei and the other groups that had been approved as pious unions, neither Opus Dei's original charism nor its subsequent development were incompatible with the definition of a pious union.

Escrivá studied the question at length and consulted experts. One of the members of Opus Dei describes "the Father in his room in Diego de Leon seated across from Fr. Bueno Monreal, then the Madrid diocese's official expert on canon law. They each had in their hands a copy of the Code of Canon Law and were discussing a possible niche for the Work in the code, even if it was only a provisional, short-term solution."

Eventually, by process of elimination, Escrivá settled on the category of pious union. He made a formal request for approval on February 14, 1941, and Bishop Eijo y Garay approved Opus Dei as a pious union on March 19, 1941. The fit was far from perfect, but it was necessary, in Escrivá's words, to "give in without giving up and with every intention of recovering" later what had to be conceded at the moment.

This concession did not involve the duplicity of Opus Dei's claiming to be something different from what it actually was. On the contrary, Escrivá asked the bishop to use the less formal route of "approval" rather than the more formal route of "erection" to

underline the provisional nature of Opus Dei's insertion into the category of pious unions and to facilitate future changes.

There may also have been another reason why Escrivá preferred simple approval to the more formal canonical erection. Under the existing Code of 1917, when an association of the faithful was canonically erected, it acquired juridical personality, the right to possess property in its own name, and a perpetual charter. An erected association, therefore, was more of an entity in the Church than one that was merely approved. Escrivá's vision of Opus Dei was that of a family within the Church, defined by a common spirit, rather than a group or association. Especially in the earliest phases of Opus Dei's life, he invited potential members not to join something or become a member of something but to accept a personal vocation to holiness and apostolate as a program of life. That is why initially he did not even pick out a name for Opus Dei. Often those he spoke to were enthused about the prospects for spiritual life and apostolate he opened up to them but had trouble remembering the name "Opus Dei." By not having Opus Dei canonically erected, Escrivá may have been emphasizing that, although, in a practical sense, the Church required Opus Dei to have some legal embodiment, what was truly important was not an organization with a certain number of members but a spirit that people tried to embody and spread to others.

To compensate for Opus Dei's canonical classification in a category that did not fit it well, Escrivá was careful to affirm its true nature in the bylaws and accompanying documents that the bishop simultaneously approved. For instance, the bylaws foresee that members of Opus Dei will undertake ecclesiastical studies and be ordained, even though pious unions did not have this right.

This was an approach Escrivá would use repeatedly in future years, when he was forced to choose among existing legal categories, none of which were entirely applicable. To avoid possible confusion arising from the general canonical norms governing the category, each time he asked for a new approval of Opus Dei, Escrivá carefully laid out Opus Dei's main features in the particular law that the Church approved for it.

The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross

As Opus Dei grew, its need for priests became more urgent. Escrivá's prewar experience with priests who had come into contact with Opus Dei after their ordination convinced him that Opus Dei had to have priests drawn from among its lay members—priests who could convey the spirit of Opus Dei because they had been living it themselves for years before they were ordained.

As early as 1936, Escrivá asked some of the members if they would be willing to be ordained at some time in the future. Shortly after the end of the civil war, he asked three young engineers—del Portillo, Múzquiz, and Hernández de Garnica—to begin studying the philosophy and theology courses that the Church requires of all candidates for ordination. Rather than send them to the diocesan seminary, he arranged, with the approval of the bishop of Madrid, for them to receive private classes from a distinguished group of professors. They would then take their exams in the seminary. Two Dominicans from the faculty of the Angelicum University in Rome who had been trapped in Spain by the outbreak of World War II, Fr. Muñiz and Fr. Alvarez, taught them dogmatic theology and canon law. Another Dominican, a longtime faculty member of the Biblical Institute in Jerusalem, instructed them in Sacred Scripture. Fr. José María Bueno Monreal, the future cardinal of Seville, was their professor of moral theology. A Benedictine, Fr. Justo Pérez de Urbel, taught liturgy; and an Agustinian, Fr. José López Ortiz, professor of the history of law at the University of Madrid, taught church history. Escrivá was the instructor for pastoral theology.

As the months and years went by, the three made rapid progress in their studies, but Escrivá still could not find a way in which they could be ordained for Opus Dei. According to the Code of Canon Law, only a diocesan bishop, the superior of a religious order or congregation, or the superior of one of the organizations that the code considered similar to a religious order could call a man to ordination. Additionally, every priest had to be "incardinated in," i.e., belong to, a particular diocese, religious

order, congregation, or similar organization, to avoid unattached, errant clerics. Furthermore, before anyone could be called to the priesthood, he had to have an appropriate "title of ordination," which involved a source of lifelong financial support. Being ordained for the service of a diocese, religious order, congregation, or similar organization was considered sufficient guarantee of financial support to constitute a title of ordination, but other priests had to have another guaranteed source of income, generally in the form of an endowment.

With the help of several distinguished canon lawyers, Escrivá poured over the Code of Canon Law seeking a solution, but to no avail. Bishop Eijo y Garay suggested that the priests might be incardinated in the diocese of Madrid with the title of ordination of chaplains of Opus Dei. Although this was the best suggestion, it did not really solve the problem. It did not guarantee that the priests would remain fully available for the needs of Opus Dei in the future, and it required an endowment, which was beyond Opus Dei's reach.

Escrivá was pondering the situation on the morning of February 14, 1943, when he went to the center on Jorge Manrique Street to celebrate Mass for his daughters on the anniversary of the foundation of the women's branch. In Escrivá's own words, "I began the Mass searching for the juridical solution that would permit incardinating priests in the Work. I had been looking for it for a long time without results. And that day, *intra missam* [within the Mass], after Holy Communion, our Lord wanted to give it to me: the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. He even gave me the seal: the sphere of the world with the cross inscribed in it."

As with other extraordinary spiritual phenomenon in his life, Escrivá rarely spoke about these events, and when he did, he was extremely laconic. It is, therefore, difficult to say exactly what happened on February 14, 1943. In essence, God revealed to Escrivá a way to have priests ordained for Opus Dei without compromising Opus Dei's true character. It was not necessary for Opus Dei to take on a new legal form that would permit the incardination of priests. Rather, there could be, within Opus Dei, a society in which the priests would be incardinated (the Priestly

Society of the Holy Cross) without ceasing to form part of Opus Dei. The seal Escrivá referred to—the cross in the world—reflects the mission of all Opus Dei members to raise up the cross of Christ in the activities of everyday life. In this sense, it ties into the locution Escrivá received on August 7, 1931, in which he understood Christ's words, "If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself," to mean that Christ wants to be placed at the summit of all human activities in order to transform the world. Additionally, in the context of what Escrivá saw on February 14, 1943, the cross inscribed in the world symbolizes the presence of a group of priests nailed to the cross of Christ—like the lay members of Opus Dei—and hidden within the larger body of the Work.

* * *

Much still remained to be done before the first priests could be ordained. It would be necessary to determine what canonical form the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross would take. Escrivá then would have to obtain from the bishop of Madrid approval for the Priestly Society. The bishop could not grant that approval without the permission (*nihil obstat*) of the Holy See. Nonetheless, the events of February 14, 1943, made clear that Opus Dei would soon be able to ordain the priests it would need to expand throughout Spain and the rest of the world.

Epilogue

The inspiration Escrivá received on February 14, 1943, led him to adopt a temporary solution to the problem of providing priests for Opus Dei. A part of the Work, comprised of priests and of laymen preparing for ordination, would be transformed into a society of common life without vows to be known as the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. Opus Dei was very different from what was commonly understood as a society of common life, and it would not have been possible to fit all of Opus Dei within its confines. For one thing, a society of common life could not have both men and women members. Nonetheless, the Code of Canon Law explicitly stated that the members of societies of common life were not religious. Therefore, use of this vehicle for the limited purpose of ordaining priests was not incompatible with the character of Opus Dei or with the divine calling its members had received when they joined it.

In October 1943, the Holy See gave its *nihil obstat* to the creation of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, and on December 8, 1943, the bishop of Madrid erected it. Six months later, on June 25, 1944, the first three priests of Opus Dei were ordained. All three were engineers. Del Portillo would continue in his role as Escrivá's closest collaborator and would eventually be his first successor as head of Opus Dei. Hernández de Garnica would play a crucial role in the development of Opus Dei in Germany and central Europe. Múzquiz would be the first priest of Opus Dei to go to the United States. In 1946, six more members of the Work were ordained, and from then on, ordinations became a regular event. By the year 2000, there would be some 1,750 priests of Opus Dei among its 80,000 members. The availability of priests who knew the spirit of Opus Dei intimately and were incorporating it into their own lives greatly accelerated the growth of the Work, despite continuing misunderstandings and opposition. By 1946, there were about 250 men and 30 women in Opus Dei.

The Second World War prevented systematic expansion to other countries, although several members went to Italy to study in the early 1940s. The end of hostilities in Europe meant that the long-awaited international expansion of Opus Dei could begin. Before the end of 1946, Opus Dei had spread to Portugal, Italy, and Great Britain, and in 1947 it reached France and Ireland.

The growth of the Work in Spain and elsewhere highlighted the inadequacies of a society of common life approved only by the bishop of Madrid. If Opus Dei were to continue expanding, it needed approval from the Holy See. Additionally, experience had underlined the need for a canonical situation more consistent with Opus Dei's lay and secular character.

In 1945, Escrivá sent del Portillo to Rome to seek Vatican approval; and in 1946, Escrivá himself moved to Rome, where he would live the rest of his life. In 1947, Pope Pius XII approved Opus Dei as the first secular institute, a new type of church institution. Three years later, Pius XII gave Opus Dei final and definitive approval. Although its new legal framework was not a perfect fit, it had to suffice for the moment.

Ever since October 2, 1928, Escrivá's vision of Opus Dei had included married members. Since at least 1940, he had told certain married men and women that they had a vocation to Opus Dei but that they would have to be patient. The papal approvals made it possible for married people actually to become members of Opus Dei. Similarly, the approvals enabled diocesan priests to join the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross and thus receive help and support in their spiritual life, while fully retaining their character as priests of their own diocese.

Opus Dei's new canonical status as an institution approved by the Holy See greatly facilitated its continued international expansion. In 1949, members went to the United States and Mexico, and during the 1950s, Opus Dei was established in Canada and eleven countries of South and Central America as well as in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, Japan, and Kenya.

In 1948, Opus Dei established its Roman College of the Holy Cross, a residential, international training center for men. In 1952, it established the Roman College of Our Lady for women.

These two institutions afforded many members of the Work an opportunity to receive spiritual and pastoral formation in the spirit of Opus Dei directly from Escrivá, while pursuing advanced degrees in philosophy, theology, canon law, and Sacred Scripture at pontifical universities in Rome. Many of the men and women who would eventually start the Work in countries around the globe first spent several years in Rome. There they acquired not only academic training and a deeper knowledge of the spirit of Opus Dei but also the universal outlook and love for the Church and the pope that Escrivá desired for all Opus Dei members.

During the 1950s, members of Opus Dei, working in collaboration with others, established a broad range of corporate activities of Opus Dei in response to the specific needs of the societies in which they lived. They varied widely in character, from universities to training centers for farm workers and from high schools to medical dispensaries in poor areas. Despite their diversity, they shared certain common characteristics: they were open to people of all races and creeds; they were inspired by a Christian spirit of service and love of freedom; they aspired to provide highly professional services; and they offered those who were interested opportunities to deepen their religious and spiritual formation.

During the 1960s, Opus Dei continued its global expansion, opening centers in Australia, the Philippines, Nigeria, and Puerto Rico as well as in Paraguay and Belgium. Its growth was facilitated by the Second Vatican Council, which eliminated any lingering doubts about the orthodoxy of Opus Dei's message. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the council incorporated into the Church's official teaching the universal call to holiness that many people had considered suspect when Escrivá began to preach it in 1928.

The Second Vatican Council also paved the way for the creation of the personal prelature, a new type of juridical structure that was ideally suited to the pastoral characteristics of Opus Dei. In 1969, a special general congress of Opus Dei met in Rome to consider changing its legal status to a personal prelature.

On June 26, 1975, Escrivá died in Rome. The congress that assembled to elect his successor chose del Portillo as the new head

of Opus Dei. Del Portillo assured the sixty thousand people who were members of Opus Dei at the time of Escrivá's death that his task as president general was to maintain fidelity to the foundational charism and loyalty to the spirit of the founder.

Del Portillo continued Escrivá's efforts to transform Opus Dei into a personal prelature, the legal framework Escrivá had thought best suited to the nature of Opus Dei as revealed to him by God on October 2, 1928. Those efforts succeeded on November 28, 1982, when Pope John Paul II established Opus Dei as a personal prelature and appointed del Portillo its first prelate. In 1991, John Paul II ordained del Portillo as bishop.

The following year, John Paul II beatified Escrivá in a ceremony in St. Peter's Square attended by approximately three hundred thousand people. His words in the homily of the Mass aptly conclude this book:

With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaría preached untiringly the universal call to holiness and apostolate. Christ calls all men and women to sanctify themselves in the reality of daily life. Therefore *work is also a means of personal sanctification and apostolate* when it is lived in union with Jesus Christ, because the Son of God united himself in a certain way to the whole reality of man and to all of creation when he became incarnate. In our society, the unbridled desire to possess material things turns them into idols and motives for distancing oneself from God. The new Blessed reminds us, however, that things, which are creatures of God and the fruit of human inventiveness, *can be the path on which men encounter Christ* if they are used rightly for the glory of God and the service of our brethren. "All the things of the earth," he taught, "including the temporal, earthly activities of men, must be brought to God." . . . The timeliness and transcendence of his spiritual message, which is deeply rooted in the Gospel, are evident. A sign of this is the fruitfulness with which God has blessed the life and work of Josemaría Escrivá.

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Notes

- Page* **Introduction**
- 9 “Whatever the”: Messori 1997, p. 2.
- 1. The Foundation of Opus Dei**
- 14 “Plain Catholics”: Cejas 1996, pp. 85–86.
- 14 “Thousands—millions”: Gondrand 1985, p. 18.
- 14 “I received”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 293.
- 14 “clear general”: *ibid.*, p. 98, n. 111.
- 14 “God our Lord”: Illanes 1981, p. 70.
- 2. The Founder’s Youth**
- 18 “José María”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 33.
- 18 “people who”: Illanes 1981, p. 70.
- 21 “She is well”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 56.
- 23 “very hard”: *ibid.*, p. 72.
- 23 “We have”: Garrido 1995, p. 56.
- 24 “I don’t”: *ibid.*, p. 57.
- 24 “I saw”: Illanes 1981, pp. 62–63.
- 25 “to sow”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 97.
- 25 “I began”: *ibid.*, p. 97.
- 25 “one’s own”: Escrivá *Camino*, no. 59.
- 26 “A director”: *ibid.*, no. 62.
- 27 “Priests”: Illanes 1981, p. 66.
- 29 “barracks”: Cárcel Orti 1990, p. 48.
- 29 “half blind”: Illanes 1981, p. 70.
- 30 “For years”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 100.
- 30 “I am”: *ibid.*, p. 347.
- 30 “spent in”: Illanes 1981, p. 70.
- 30 “letting himself”: quoted in *ibid.*, p. 70.
- 32 “A man”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 133.
- 32 “the fancy”: *ibid.*, p. 133.
- 32 “Josemaría was”: *ibid.*, p. 132.
- 33 “To Jesus”: Escrivá *Camino*, no. 495.
- 33 “changeable”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 137.
- 33 “vocation”: *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 34 “What would”: *ibid.*, p. 136.
- 35 “To pray”: Escrivá *Camino*, no. 91.
- 35 “Lord, I”: AGP P09, p. 117.
- 35 “And in”: Escrivá *Camino*, no. 92.
- 36 “sinner who”: Orlandis 1994, p. 178.
- 36 “God helped”: AGP P01 10/1978, p. 18.
- 36 “Not knowing”: *ibid.*, p. 18.
- 36 “Our Lord”: Cejas 1993, pp. 37–38.
- 37 “practically left”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 162.
- 38 “It is inevitable”: Escrivá *Camino*, no. 20.
- 41 “What the”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 190.
- 42 “Lord may”: *ibid.*, p. 192, n. 182.
- 3. Years of Preparation**
- 44 “What does”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 206.
- 49 “nothing and”: Illanes 1981, p. 75.
- 49 “entered my”: Sastre 1989, p. 84.
- 50 “I reached”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 283.
- 50 “When we”: Muñoz González 1994, p. 373.
- 51 “Hours and”: Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 280.
- 51 “*Fac, ut*”: *ibid.*, p. 286.
- 53 “I’m not”: del Portillo 1992, p. 30.
- 53 “Out of”: *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 53 “I had”: *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 53 “They were strokes”: *ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

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- 58 "Your duty": Escrivá *Camino*, no. 291.
- 59 "For a Christian": Escrivá *Es Cristo*, no. 42.
- 59 "A secret": Escrivá *Camino*, no. 301.
- 60 "From its": John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*, AAS 75 (1983): 423.
- 60 "To dedicate": Escrivá, *Carta* 25-I-1961, no. 11.
- 60 "doing Opus Dei": Illanes in Rodríguez 1992, p. 124.
- 60 "all souls": Mateo-Seco 1994, p. 25.
- 61 "twenty-six": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 308.
- 61 "True: financially": Escrivá *Camino*, no. 473.
- 61 "So you": *ibid.*, no. 474.
- 62 "as old": Cejas 1993, p. 61.
- 62 "like the Gospel": *ibid.*, p. 61.
- 62 "people spoke": Castán Lacoma 1994, pp. 103-4.
- 62 "naturally, the": Cantero Cuadrado 1994, p. 63.
- 63 "Sanctity is": Rodríguez 1992, p. 30.
- 63 "Our Lord": *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 63 "First, prayer": Escrivá *Es Cristo*, no. 82.
- 63 "What can": del Portillo 1992, p. 35.
- 63 "Next to": Escrivá *Es Cristo*, no. 98.
- 64 "My daughter": Cejas 1996, p. 112.
- 64 "a desire": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 317.
- 64 "You know": *ibid.*, p. 318.
- 65 "Our Lord": *ibid.*, pp. 318-19.
- 65 "I was": *ibid.*, p. 317.
- 65 "an apostolate": Escrivá *Surco*, no. 192.
- 66 "Don't let": Escrivá *Camino*, no. 1.
- 67 "I didn't": AGP Po6 525, 1.
- 68 "Immediately after": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 323.
- 68 "Our Lord": *ibid.*, p. 324.
- 69 "very interesting": Pero-Sanz 1996, p. 113.
- 69 "I felt": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 447.
- 69 "I want": AGP Po1 12/1993, p. 75.
- 70 "When I": *ibid.*, p. 76.

- 70 "I feel": *ibid.*, p. 77.
- 71 "Look. To be": Pero-Sanz 1996, p. 120.
- 71 "How is": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 333.
- 72 "God didn't": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 337.

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- 80 "like a": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 359.
- 80 "if a single": Payne 1993, p. 45.
- 83 "the so-called": Redondo 1993, p. 146.
- 83 "The State": *ibid.*, p. 160, n. 7.
- 84 "May the Immaculate": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 357.
- 85 "Don't worry": Pero-Sanz 1996, p. 126.
- 85 "I suppose": *ibid.*, p. 128.
- 85 "about Love": Vázquez de Prada 1997, pp. 405-6.
- 86 "In the end": *ibid.*, p. 360.
- 86 "A cockroach": *ibid.*, p. 361.
- 87 "A priest": *ibid.*, p. 361.
- 87 "I have": *ibid.*, p. 365.
- 88 "Your Work": *ibid.*, p. 365.
- 88 "Yesterday I": *ibid.*, p. 364.

6. New Lights

- 89 "At the moment": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 381.
- 90 "not in": *ibid.*, p. 380.
- 90 "United to": *ibid.*, pp. 383-84.
- 90 "even and": Rodríguez 1992b, p. 27.
- 91 "Working and": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 383.
- 91 "I didn't": *ibid.*, p. 385.
- 91 "realized that": *ibid.*, p. 386.
- 92 "We are": *Instrucción* March 19, 1934, nos. 14-15.
- 92 "I considered": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 388.
- 93 "prayer of": *ibid.*, p. 389.
- 93 "felt our Lord's": *ibid.*, pp. 389-90.
- 93 "When God": Fuenmayor 1989, p. 31.
- 94 "Lord, I": AGP Po6 383.
- 94 "I could": Vázquez de Prada 1997, pp. 390-91.

- 95 "little Thérèse": *ibid.*, p. 415, n. 206.
- 95 "I paid": *ibid.*, p. 405.
- 96 "I devoured": *ibid.*, p. 406.
- 96 "The Child": *ibid.*, p. 407.
- 96 "a secret": Escrivá *Santo Rosario*, Introduction.
- 98 "Child. You are": Vázquez de Prada 1997, pp. 413-14.
- 99 "February 16": *ibid.*, p. 417.
- 100 "What a great": *ibid.*, p. 418.
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- 101 "I think": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 373.
- 102 "I don't": *ibid.*, p. 399.
- 102 "I am": *ibid.*, p. 396.
- 102 "I find": *ibid.*, p. 396.
- 103 "I looked": *ibid.*, p. 397.
- 103 "Lord, what": *ibid.*, p. 398.
- 104 "Children. The Sick.": *ibid.*, p. 427.
- 105 "Jesus, keep": *ibid.*, p. 430.
- 105 "Isn't it": Escrivá *Camino*, no. 626.
- 105 "Yesterday I": Vázquez de Prada 1997, pp. 393-94.
- 106 "vague imprecise": García Lahiguera 1994, p. 149.
- 106 "clear, precise": López Ortiz 1994, p. 211.
- 107 "I was": Cejas 1996, p. 130.
- 107 "María, we": *ibid.*, p. 134.
- 107 "Jesus, I": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 445.
- 108 "returned on": *ibid.*, p. 445.
- 109 "I think": *ibid.*, p. 457.
- 109 "The intention": Cejas 1996, p. 146.
- 109 "We don't": Vázquez de Prada 1997, p. 445.
- 111 "What will": Cejas 1996, p. 166.
- 112 "Our Lord": Vázquez de Prada 1997, pp. 623-24.
- 112 "Alone before": Cejas 1996, pp. 194-95.
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- 117 "Be completely": Pero-Sanz 1996, p. 134.
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- 120 "The things": *ibid.*, p. 473-74.
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- 120 "We must": Redondo 1993, p. 204.
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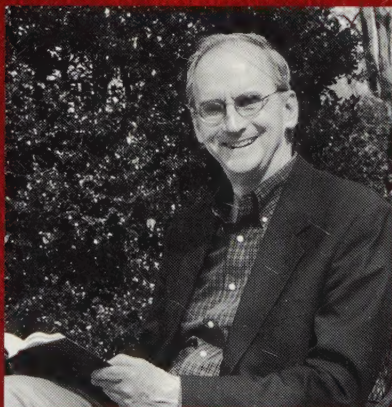
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ISBN 1-85182-724-2



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