

Albert ALÓS, *Sowing the Seed. Personal Memories of the First Ten Years of Opus Dei in Nigeria (1965-75)*, Ibadan, Feathers and Ink, 2016, 267 pp.

The African Continent has occupied a very special place in St Josemaría's heart. The first documented instance of his love for Africa and its people comes from a trip through Southern Spain, on Good Friday, 30th March 1945. That day, near Algeciras, from the top of the Tarifa hills, he saw for the first time the coast of Africa across the straits, and his thoughts turned to the souls waiting in that huge continent. «Can these straits be a barrier to Christianity?» he said with great emotion. «How much there is to do!» (Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. II, 2003, p. 480). As soon as it was feasible, Opus Dei was able to start its apostolic work in Africa: first in Kenya, and then in several other countries.

The book under review joins other testimonies about St Josemaría's interest for Africa. In this case, the writer was a protagonist of the beginnings of the apostolic work in Nigeria. Starting with the story of his vocation to Opus Dei, Prof. Albert Alós guides us through the first ten years of Opus Dei in Nigeria, and St Josemaría's constant concern for the members of Opus Dei in that country. Just a sample: «We also got a letter from Rome telling us that the Father [J. Escrivá] was praying for Nigeria. Someone had asked St. Josemaría in a get-together in Molinoviejo: "how do you live the presence of God?" And our Father replied that he was offering that get-together for Nigeria» (p. 202). The book ends in 1975, the year of saint Josemaría's death.

Through abundant and juicy stories narrated by the same protagonists, some of them already deceased, we enter into a better knowledge of a great culture. Nigerian voices express what was for them their encounter with the spirit of Opus Dei. It is worthy of mention too the invaluable testimony of the diaries kept during those years, specially when it was written by Jeremy White, a Cambridge graduate who was the first member of Opus Dei in Africa, though not the first African to join Opus Dei: «I once met him at his desk writing the diary and commended him for the detailed account of the day. He answered: "I am a historian; I am writing history". He knew that these diaries would be read by people interested in the history of the Work in Nigeria» (p. 89).

The stories in the book reflect the "madness" of going to a country then falling apart. When the young Albert Alós meets the Dean of the Faculty, in the university where he is going to work, his boss tells him: «Do you know we are in the midst of a civil war? To my positive reply he added, and you still came to Nigeria. You are a man of faith. I think we will work very well together» (p. 110).

For the keen watchers of the Catholic Church, Africa is a Continent to follow closely. If the present growth rates in the different continents continue, in 2040 one quarter of the Catholic faithful will be Africans. Almost one hundred years ago, Christianity was still struggling to take roots in Africa, while now we may dare say it holds an important key for the future of the Church. And Nigeria will be a very crucial player in the future of Christianity, as one of every four inhabitants of Africa

south of the Sahara desert is a Nigerian, living in the most populated country in Africa.

We should also congratulate Feathers & Ink, a young burgeoning Nigerian publishing company, for the good care and excellent design in the production of this book.

Diego de Jódar

José Miguel CEJAS, *Cálido viento del norte. Relatos de disidentes de las ideologías dominantes en Suecia, Noruega, Dinamarca y Finlandia, Islandia, Groenlandia y las Islas Feroe*, Madrid, Rialp, 2016, 348 pp.

El 4 de febrero de 2016 falleció en Madrid, de manera inesperada, José Miguel Cejas (Castellón, 1952), doctor en Ciencias de la Información por la Universidad de Navarra, periodista y escritor.

Como escritor publicó una serie de biografías de carácter divulgativo sobre san Josemaría Escrivá y otros fieles del Opus Dei: el beato Álvaro del Portillo, María Ignacia García Escobar, Montserrat Grases, José María Somoano y Ernesto Cofiño.

Además, tras realizar una serie de viajes a Japón, Rusia, los países bálticos y nórdicos, se centró en dar a conocer la vida cotidiana de algunos cristianos –católicos, luteranos y ortodoxos–, y los comienzos de la actividad apostólica de la Prelatura del Opus Dei en esas tierras.

Fruto de esos viajes son tres libros de testimonios de personas que cuentan su vida a la luz de la fe: *Los cerezos en flor: relatos sobre la expansión del Opus Dei en Japón* (2013), *El baile tras la tormenta: relatos de disidentes de los países bálticos y Rusia* (2014), y el libro que nos ocupa, *Cálido viento del norte* (2016), cuyo autor señalaba que «con este libro deseo mostrar el servicio que prestan a la Iglesia tantas personas del Opus Dei y su trabajo a favor del ecumenismo».

Efectivamente, el libro está compuesto de cuarenta testimonios de luteranos, ortodoxos y católicos que viven en los países nórdicos. Todos ellos son calificados de *disidentes*, ya que se opusieron a la corriente dominante en los territorios de Europa septentrional, y las regiones autónomas de las Islas Feroe y Groenlandia, donde un materialismo pragmático congeló la espiritualidad y sofocó los valores cristianos que a duras penas lograron pervivir.

Al final del libro, el autor deja abierta una puerta a la esperanza. Pese a que algunos pensaron que el materialismo iba a sofocar la fe, en estos países se aprecia en la vida de hombres y mujeres de edades, profesiones y ambientes culturales muy variados, un estilo de vida que constituye «un viento cálido y renovador, procedente del Norte de Europa», apoyado en la familia.

J. Mario Fernández Montes