

Irena KALPAS – Marcin LUDWICKI, *F 27 Czy tu jeszcze rosną róże?*, Nowy Sącz, Prodoks, 2007, 96 pp.

Warsaw, June 26, 2002, was the day of an unexpected, life-changing encounter for Irena Kalpas, an old woman in the autumn of her life, and a time when changes are rare. But it was not so in this case, and fate still had to unveil many of its consequences. That day, although she had previously refused to pass through a street full of memories, the author inexplicably entered the house where she lived with her uncle and aunt before the Second World War. Entering the home for the first time in many years, she encountered Opus Dei. On Filtrowa Street, 27, Irena Kalpas asked “Do the roses still grow here?” A question that has become the title of the book.

The book is the fruit of conversations with Marcin Ludwicki and is a poignant tale of the story of a life lived in a house on Filtrowa Street. It vividly and colorfully portrays the social life and surroundings of Warsaw in the time between the two world wars, with its famous streets, buildings, shops, cafes and social aspects in political and social life. Kalpas describes her family, her youth, love, marriage, the outbreak of war, the pain of the separation and the death of her uncle and husband, as well as the advent of a new social reality for Poland.

The recollections contained in this book, along with many photographs, form an emotional remembrance of the world that passed and the people who shaped it.

It also tells the story of Kalpas's last years, seen from a new perspective. Indeed, the author firmly believes that it was Saint Josemaria Escrivá who led her that day to Filtrowa Street 27, because the year, 2002, was the centennial of his birth and also the year of his canonization. From that moment on, Kalpas became interested in the character and writings of the founder of Opus Dei, and began participating in the formation offered by the institution.

It is an extraordinary story about a "normal" life, the life of a woman who lived through the war and a concentration camp. At the same time, it offers a calm and encouraging testimony, given with strength and conviction conveying the "security that we must always have hope and not abandon oneself to carelessness, a security that you can always start" (p. 94). This is the message that Kalpa wants to give to everyone: God's plans are inscrutable, and even at the end of life something new might start.

The book is the first publication about a member of Opus Dei in Poland.

Monika Dabrowska