

José María González Barredo. An American Pioneer

JOHN F. COVERDALE

Abstract: *José María González Barredo, chemist and school professor met St. Josemaría and Opus Dei in the 1930s. He moved to the United States in 1946 for professional motives and became the first member of the Work in that country. In parallel with his academic projects he paved the way for the commencement of Opus Dei in the United States.*

Keywords: *Jose María González Barredo – United States – Opus Dei – 1946-1949*

José María González Barredo. Un pioniere americano: *José María González, chimico e professore ordinario, conobbe san Josemaría e l'Opus Dei negli anni trenta. Nel 1946 si trasferì in America per motivi professionali e diventò il primo membro dell'Opera in quel paese. Durante il periodo in cui sviluppò i suoi progetti accademici preparò il cammino per l'avvio di una duratura attività pastorale dell'Opus Dei negli Stati Uniti.*

Keywords: *Jose María González Barredo – Stati Uniti – Opus Dei – 1946-1949*

The pioneers who first cut the forests, plowed the prairie, and founded towns play a vital role in the history and mythology of the United States¹. Many of them were eccentrics, who despite their eccentricity, and in part because of it, contributed to preparing the way for those who came after

¹ Some of the most iconic works of American literature feature pioneers. Among the major examples are James Fenimore COOPER, *The Deerslayer* (1841), Willa CATHER, *O Pioneers!* (1913), and Laura Ingalls WILDER, *Little House on the Prairie* (1935).

them. José María González Barredo² was a pioneer in Opus Dei. Not only was he among the first people to join Opus Dei. He was also the first member of Opus Dei to come to the United States where he lived for three years before Fr. Joseph Múzquiz and three others came to join him³.

EARLY MEMBER OF OPUS DEI⁴

José María González Barredo was born in 1906 in the small coastal town of Colunga, in the northern Spanish province of Asturias. He grew up in a devoutly Catholic family and from an early age began to think seriously about vocation. He had a strong sense that God wanted something of him, but it did not seem to be any of the specific vocations that existed in the Church at the time. His concern with vocation became so obsessive that for a time it prevented him from studying effectively. At eighteen or nineteen he made a retreat. The retreat master advised him not to think further about vocation unless an angel came down from heaven and showed him in detail what God wanted of him. On the strength of that advice, he stopped worrying about the problem, although he continued to think God wanted something from him⁵.

² His complete last name is González Barredo. Applying the normal Spanish convention, the short form would be González. He was, however, much more frequently referred to both in Spain and in the United States as Barredo, and this article follows that usage.

³ In an era of relatively cheap overnight flights to Europe, e-mail, and Skype it is hard to imagine the degree to which Barredo was cut off from the other members of Opus Dei during those three years. They prayed for each other and maintained an abundant correspondence, but had very little other contact. For the history of Fr. Joseph Múzquiz and the establishment of Opus Dei in the United States, see John F. Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots. Father Joseph Múzquiz and the Growth of Opus Dei*, New York, Scepter, 2009.

⁴ This section is based on three documents found in the General Archive of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Rome [AGP], serie A.5, leg. 216, carp. 3, exp. 11. The most extensive is Barredo's written testimony for the cause of canonization of St. Josemaria. It is dated May 25, 1976 in Washington, D.C. I cite it as "Testimony". In 1967, D. Francisco Botella tape recorded Barredo's recollections. The transcription of those recollections, headed "De unas cintas tomadas a Don José María González Barredo grabadas en 1967 por D. Francisco Botella" bears at the end the typed name José María González Barredo and the date Pamplona Sept. 14, 1986. I cite it as "Cintas." The oldest of the three documents is a handwritten three-page autobiographical account with no title dated Plasencia, May 6 1934. I cite it as "Account of Vocation".

⁵ Account of vocation. Testimony.

Although initially he had thought about entering one of the military academies, he eventually decided to go to the university and study chemistry⁶. During his years at the university, he was actively involved in various Catholic groups and served as president of the science section of the Association of Catholic Students. He eventually concluded, however, that such organizations were a waste of time and stopped going to their meetings⁷.

After finishing his degree in Chemistry, Barredo began working on a PhD. In the meantime, he won a national competition for a teaching position as *Catedrático de instituto* in the government-run high school in Linares in the province of Jaen, in southern Spain⁸. At the time such positions were highly prestigious, and it was not uncommon for ambitious young men who had their sights set on becoming university professors to begin their careers as *Catedráticos de instituto*.

Barredo's family lived on Caracas Street in Madrid⁹, close to the church of the Patronato de Enfermos, whose chaplain was St. Josemaría Escrivá. Barredo went there for daily Mass. Even before they met, St. Josemaría, who saw him coming in for Mass each morning¹⁰, wrote in his notebook that someday he would belong to the Work¹¹. One day St. Josemaría approached him after Mass and asked him to pray for the canonization of Mercedes Reyna, a member of the order that ran the Patronato¹². On March 25, 1931, St. Josemaría approached him again after Mass and asked him to pray for a special intention. Barredo was impressed with something in the way in which he made his request and thanked him for asking him¹³. St. Josemaría recorded the incident in the journal he kept at the time:

Today, the 25th, the feast of the Annunciation of our Lady, with my *apostolic* audacity (daring!) I went up to a young man who, with great piety and recollection, receives Communion every day in my church. He, in fact, had just received our Lord when I said to him, "Listen, would you be so good

⁶ Account of vocation.

⁷ Cintas.

⁸ Testimony.

⁹ Testimony.

¹⁰ St. Josemaría heard confessions in the church each morning before Mass. In the 1930s, the door of the priest's compartment in Spanish confessionals was only about three feet high, so the priest could look out over the top of the door and see people in the church.

¹¹ Testimony.

¹² Cintas. Testimony.

¹³ Testimony.

as to pray a little for a special intention that's for the glory of God?" "Yes, Father," he answered – and he even thanked me! The intention was that he, being so devout, be chosen by God to be an apostle in his Work. On other occasions, when I have seen him from my confessional, I have made this same request of his guardian angel¹⁴.

While teaching in Linares, Barredo returned to Madrid during vacations to work on his PhD thesis. In order to perfect his German he lived in a German-speaking boarding house¹⁵. Early on the morning of Saturday February 11, 1933, on his way to the Rockefeller Institute where he was doing research for his thesis, he saw St. Josemaría on the other side of the street. Barredo was in a hurry and tried to avoid even saying hello, but St. Josemaría quickly crossed the street and stopped him. Barredo was afraid that he wanted to get him involved again in Catholic Action or in some other similar project, so at first he resisted his invitation to get together later, but eventually he agreed to meet briefly¹⁶. As the day wore on, he found himself looking forward to the meeting with a deep sense of joy and an inkling that perhaps that priest might have the solution to his vocational question¹⁷.

At their meeting, St. Josemaría explained Opus Dei to him. Without referring to any extraordinary supernatural phenomena, he stressed, as he would do in one of his early writings, that the Work «is not a human undertaking, but a great supernatural undertaking which began fulfilling literally everything that is necessary to be called without boasting the *Work of God*»¹⁸.

Barredo responded immediately and without doubt or hesitation that he wanted to form part of the Work¹⁹. To make sure that Barredo fully understood what this meant, St. Josemaría insisted on the totality of self-giving that a vocation to the Work entailed. In light of his insistence, Barredo went to consult the Jesuit priest who was his spiritual director. That priest's

¹⁴ Josemaría ESCRIVÁ, *Apuntes íntimos*, n. 184, quoted in Andrés VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *The Founder of Opus Dei. The Life of Josemaría Escrivá*, Volume I: *The Early Years*, Princeton, Scepter, 2001, p. 378.

¹⁵ Testimony.

¹⁶ Account of vocation. Testimony. Cintas. In the Account of Vocation written in 1934, Barredo says that the appointment was for the following Sunday. Both Testimony and Cintas describe the meeting as taking place in the late afternoon of the day they met on the street. Given that two latter sources date from more than 30 years after the event, it seems likely the Account version is correct.

¹⁷ Testimony.

¹⁸ Josemaría ESCRIVÁ DE BALAGUER, *Instrucción 19-III-1934*, n. 1, AGP, Biblioteca.

¹⁹ Account of vocation. Testimony. Cintas.

only reaction was to comment that «It is much easier to work in a library that is already organized than in one that is just getting organized»²⁰. Barredo thought that an excessively natural way to view the question and returned to tell St. Josemaría that he was determined to join the Work²¹. In this way Barredo became the fourth person who would persevere as a member of Opus Dei, preceded only by the founder, Isidoro Zorzano and Juan Jiménez Vargas.

FIRST MEMBER OF OPUS DEI TO WORK IN THE UNITED STATES

Reasons for Going to the United States

In the mid-1940s, Barredo, who had done post-doctoral research at the University of Göttingen in Germany on a Humboldt Foundation fellowship²², was thinking of returning to Germany for further research. St. Josemaría, however, suggested that he consider going to the United States instead because of the importance of beginning Opus Dei's apostolate there²³. In March 1945 Barredo wrote about dreaming of going to the United States, suggesting he might get a position in the embassy²⁴. A few months later, he started to plan a summer trip to the United States²⁵, but almost a year would go by before he would board in Lisbon the ship that took him to the United States in February 1946.

Barredo's correspondence does not directly address the motives of his interest in the United States. It seems probable, however, that both professional and apostolic factors were at work. From a professional point of view, it was becoming clear that the US was likely to displace a war-ravaged Germany as the center of scientific research. The American economy had grown by more the 50% during the war, and scientific research had received a major

²⁰ Cintas. Testimony.

²¹ Cintas. Testimony.

²² “Algunos contactos apostólicos al inicio de la labor apostólica en Estados Unidos”. This document is found in the folder that holds Barredo's written recollections for the canonization of St. Josemaría (AGP, serie A.5, leg. 216, carp. 3, exp. 11). Barredo signed and dated it in Pamplona on September, 14, 1986. Cited hereinafter as “Algunos contactos”.

²³ Cintas.

²⁴ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 450328, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 182 A-3.

²⁵ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 450514 and 450701, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 182 A-3.

stimulus. Although the United States had suffered significant casualties and would face real challenges in reconverting to a peace-time economy, it seemed poised for rapid growth in scientific research. By contrast, Germany faced bleak prospects of long years of recovery from the war.

From an apostolic point of view, the ordination of the first three priests of Opus Dei in June 1944 and the end of World War II in Europe in May 1945 opened prospects for the expansion to other countries which had been part of St. Josemaría's plans for Opus Dei from its foundation. The day of their ordination, Barredo wrote to the three new priests, «Now we can really dream of England, Germany, ...».²⁶ Although he did not mention the United States, he felt the United States would play a key role in the future development of the apostolate of Opus Dei.

Many factors pointed toward the growing cultural influence of the United States in the world. One that particularly caught Barredo's attention was the growing world-wide impact of Hollywood. In a June 1946 letter Barredo told St. Josemaría about taking a non-Christian Indian friend to see the *Bells of St. Mary's*, a film in which a priest portrayed by Bing Crosby and a nun portrayed by Ingrid Bergman struggle to save a parochial school. After commenting on how much good the film had done his friend, he added, that while it would be great to have St. Josemaría's book *The Way* translated into English, German and other languages, the really useful thing would be to have a good movie about Opus Dei²⁷.

Barredo's enthusiasm for the future role of the United States in Opus Dei's apostolic activities is evident in a letter he wrote from the ship that took him to the United States in 1946: «I would move most of Opus Dei to the US leaving just a few in Spain»²⁸. The need for people of the Work to come to the United States would soon become a recurring theme in his letters²⁹. He urged that the Founder should come soon to the United States and suggested that if the central offices of the Work couldn't be moved there a full-blown center was urgently needed³⁰.

²⁶ Barredo to Álvaro del Portillo, José Luis Múzquiz and José María Hernández Garnica, 440526, AGP, serie M.1.1 C182 A 3.

²⁷ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 460623, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A1.

²⁸ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 460211, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A1.

²⁹ for example, Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 460523, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

³⁰ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 480619, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

Barredo's desire to move forward quickly in the United States did not mean that he thought everything would go smoothly or be easy. In fact on at least one occasion he concluded that much prayer was needed «because the environment is very hostile, perhaps worse than anywhere other than Norway, Sweden, and Russia»³¹.

Reflecting later on his experiences, Barredo noted that many of the challenges facing the Church in the United States were related to the fact that the American Catholic population was still largely made up of recent immigrants, most of whom had little money. He thought that although Catholic primary education was quite good, Catholic higher education was poor. At all levels there was an atmosphere of relativism, which Barredo as a physicist attributed to the influence of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle³².

Barredo was also deeply concerned about the influence of the Masonry in the United States. The United States, with some 3 million Masons in the mid 1940s, accounted for about half of all the Masons in the world. Presidents Harding, Roosevelt and Truman were all Masons. Many other people in positions of influence were Masons³³. The Church had officially condemned Masonry on grounds that it advocated a Deistic vision of God incompatible with Catholic belief and that Masons were dedicated to eliminating the Church's influence in public life³⁴. The 1917 Code of Canon Law, which was still in force in the 1940s, explicitly prohibited Catholics from becoming Masons under pain of excommunication³⁵. During the years of the Spanish Second Republic from 1931 to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Barredo had experienced many efforts to eliminate or at least lessen the influence of the Church in the life of Spain. Many of the leaders of those efforts, which had often been violent, were or were widely believed to be Masons³⁶. Many Americans believed that Masonry in the United States was very different from Masonry in Spain and other Latin countries. Given Barredo's background, however, it is not surprising that he doubted that. He

³¹ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470616, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

³² Algunos contactos.

³³ Cfr. Mark TABBERT, *American Freemasons. Three Centuries of Building Communities*, New York, New York University Press, 2006.

³⁴ Leo XIII, *Ab Apostolici* (1890), *Custodi di quella fede* (1892), *Inimica vis* (1892), and *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae* (1894).

³⁵ Code of Canon Law (1917), canon 2335.

³⁶ Cfr. José Antonio FERRER BENIMELI, *Jefes de Gobierno MASONES. España 1868-1936*, Madrid, La esfera de los libros, 2007, pp.195-206.

worried about the influence of Masons in the United States and was scandalized to meet priests who assured him that in the United States Masons were interested only in promoting human welfare³⁷.

Another factor in American life which worried Barredo was birth control. He frequently expressed his concern with its spread³⁸.

Professional Work

Barredo reached New York sometime in early March 1946. He came with a generous fellowship from Spain (\$450 a month, or about \$5,400 a month in current dollars)³⁹ but without a definite position. He spent the first weeks of his stay in the United States, and possibly the first few months, trying to find an academic home. Toward the end of March he told Don Álvaro del Portillo that professionally things were starting to come together, but he did not spell out what that meant⁴⁰. The former US ambassador to Spain, Carleton J.H. Hayes, gave him an introduction to the Director of the American Council of Learned Societies. Hayes also suggested that the best places for starting Opus Dei might be Harvard University, because of its vibrant Catholic Club, or Chicago, where he thought Cardinal Stritch would be especially supportive⁴¹. Possibly for this reason Barredo focused initially on Boston.

By June 1946, he had received a one-year appointment as an unpaid research associate in the Department of Chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He investigated the possibility of working simultaneous at MIT and Harvard⁴², but nothing came of it. Building on the work he had done in Göttingen, he researched methods for studying the speed of reactions on electrodes. He also devoted considerable time trying to get a patent on a process he had developed earlier but ran into a number of obstacles. MIT wanted him to assign to the school at least part of any patent he

³⁷ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 470103, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

³⁸ For example, Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 470518 AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

³⁹ Barredo to José María Albareda, 460718, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁴⁰ Barredo to Álvaro del Portillo, 460329, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁴¹ Algunos contactos. An eyewitness account of the Harvard Catholic Club during the 1940s can be found in Sister Mary CLARE, *Keeping the Faith at Harvard*, St. Bede's Publications, 2010. Samuel Cardinal Stritch had been the Archbishop of Chicago since 1939. He was made a Cardinal by Pope Pius XII in February 1946.

⁴² Barredo to José María Albareda, 460718, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

might get⁴³. Even more important, he had published his results in a scientific journal, which under American law precluded obtaining a patent.

Before many months had gone by, Barredo concluded that things were not going to work out at MIT and moved to Columbia. It is not clear what sort of arrangement he had at Columbia, but there too he soon grew dissatisfied⁴⁴. One day while crossing the Columbia campus he got to talking with a blind man whom he saw walking by. In the course of the conversation it came out that the man, a former General who had lost his sight during World War II, was friends with the director of the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C. Armed with a letter of introduction from the General, a short time later Barredo obtained a position there. The initial appointment was apparently for a short term, but in April, 1947 it was extended⁴⁵. Barredo spent most if not all of 1947 at the Bureau of Standards⁴⁶, continuing his work on measuring the speed of reactions⁴⁷. In October 1947 he told a member of Opus Dei in Madrid that his work was going well, but that if he was needed in Spain he could return early⁴⁸. The following January he wrote Don José Luis Muzquiz saying that his experiments were going well, but that if were needed in Dublin, where Opus Dei had just begun its apostolic work, «they will go even better there»⁴⁹.

As soon as he arrived in the United States, Barredo began participating actively in various professional societies. In September 1947, for instance, he attended the meeting of the Electro-Chemical Society in Boston, where he presented a highly theoretical paper on the interrelations between time and other dimensions⁵⁰. At the Congress of the International Union of Crystallography held at Harvard in fall 1948 he presented two papers, one on

⁴³ Barredo to José María Hernández Garnica, 460727, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁴⁴ Algunos contactos.

⁴⁵ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470419, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

⁴⁶ Algunos contactos.

⁴⁷ Barredo to J.M. Iñiguez, 470927, AGP, serie M.1.1 C1128 B-1.

⁴⁸ Barredo to José Ramón Madurga, 471020, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B 1.

⁴⁹ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 480113, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B 4.

⁵⁰ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470917, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B 1. In his letter to Pedro Casciaro, Barredo commented on the high degree of precision that had been obtained in the measurement of time. Time, he added, is important because it leads to eternity. If other dimensions could be reduced to time, we would see their importance. He added, however, that in the paper presented to the Electro-Chemical society he had not referred to eternity.

the “Depolarization Factor of Raman Lines”, and another on the “Infrared-Raman Study of Crystallization at Low Temperatures”⁵¹.

In Fall 1947, Barredo’s attention shifted to Chicago. His interest in Chicago was largely triggered by what seemed to be attractive prospects for the apostolate of Opus Dei there, as we shall see shortly. From a purely professional point of view, however, Chicago was also exceptionally interesting. In fact, the University of Chicago was at the time the only university in the world that could boast of four Noble Prizes in Chemistry and Physics⁵². Barredo proposed a research project⁵³ and by January 1948 he was in Chicago working on a project funded by the National Bureau of Standards⁵⁴.

In addition to his professional work, Barredo spent quite a bit of time tracking down, purchasing, and sending to Madrid and to Rome items that people needed there: sugar, flour, and other food items, professional books, chemical reagents for his chemist colleagues, a tape recorder (apparently to record meditations given by the Founder and get-togethers with him), and even a small organ⁵⁵. Although some of these chores involved quite a bit of research and searching, Barredo liked doing them because they made him feel closer to the other members of the Work⁵⁶.

He also greatly appreciated hearing about the activities of St. Josemaría and the apostolic activities going on in the various centers. Requests for more news are common in his correspondence⁵⁷. Occasionally they take on the tone of a complaint: «You don’t know what it is to be alone»⁵⁸. For his part, in addition to writing frequently to both St. Josemaría and other members of the Work, Barredo kept close to the apostolic efforts of other members of the Work by praying for them and for the people they were doing apostolate with.

⁵¹ Barredo to José María Albareda, 480708, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁵² Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 480705, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁵³ Algunos contactos. The project involved studying the Raman effect at low temperatures.

⁵⁴ Barredo to Luigi Raimondi, 480104, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁵⁵ References to these activities are frequent and no useful purpose would be served by listing the numerous letters in which they occur.

⁵⁶ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470621, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

⁵⁷ For example, Barredo to Federico Suárez, 461021, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁵⁸ Barredo to Federico Suárez, 470108, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

Laying the Foundations for Opus Dei's Apostolate in the United States

Barredo, who had fully assimilated the apostolic spirit of Opus Dei, saw working in the United States as an opportunity to bring many people closer to God in whatever ways he could, but especially by communicating to them Opus Dei's message about the call to sanctity in the midst of the world. Above all he felt the urgent need for finding young men who could receive a vocation to Opus Dei and spread in their turn its message.

1. Reaching Out to Many People

Barredo's American apostolate began even before he reached the shores of the United States. When his ship docked in the Canary Islands, he wrote to St. Josemaría full of enthusiasm for the apostolic opportunities offered by ocean travel: «The boat is a great place for apostolate. It would be a shame for it to be displaced by the plane. It is the apostolate of dinner, of the trip, of walks on deck, of the boat! There is a wide selection of people from all over the world. If ships didn't exist, we'd have to invent them. They are made for us in a special way»⁵⁹. On board he met three Mexican priests who agreed to offer Mass for the prompt beginning of Opus Dei's apostolate in Mexico⁶⁰.

Barredo's vibrant apostolic spirit and his unwavering faith led him to reach out to people of all sorts in the most varied circumstances. While living at MIT's graduate house, he made friends with the Indian whom he took to see *The Bells of St. Mary's*, and for whose conversion he prayed⁶¹. He also made friends with a Chinese student who he thought might eventually convert to Catholicism. Since the student was interested in stamp collecting, he gave him a number of Spanish stamps.

After meeting an engineer who worked for Radio Company of America he asked him for help in deciding what sort of microphones to buy for a project in Spain. Shortly thereafter, he wrote to Fr. Hernández Garnica whom St. Josemaría had put to work nailing up things in the oratory the first time he came to the Opus Dei residence on Ferraz Street in Madrid before the Spanish Civil War. «Do you remember the nails at Ferraz?» he asked as

⁵⁹ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 460211, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁶⁰ Barredo to Álvaro del Portillo, 460211, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁶¹ Barredo to José María Hernández Garnica, 460729, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1. Barredo to Federico Suárez, 461021, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

he requested suggestions of more projects he could get the engineer involved in⁶².

Walking down Twenty-third Street in Manhattan, he overheard a South American boasting to his friend about unseemly things he had done a few days earlier. He accosted him and said «You should be ashamed to act like that being Spanish». The young man, he reported, reacted well and they ended up having a Coke together. In the letter in which he told St. Josemaría about the incident, he concluded «We need more people of the Work here»⁶³.

Having dinner in a restaurant in Washington one Friday, he noticed that a young man had ordered fish. American Catholics were required at the time to abstain from meat on Fridays, so he concluded he was probably Catholic and struck up a conversation with him. When he learned that he was studying diplomacy at Georgetown University and that one of his fellow students was about to go to Spain, he arranged to meet the other student⁶⁴. He met another Georgetown student at Mass and proposed that they meet to practice languages⁶⁵.

A characteristic feature of Barredo's personal apostolate was his effort to spread private devotion to Isidoro Zorzano, the first member of Opus Dei other than its Founder, who had died in 1943. His cause of canonization was opened by the Archbishop of Madrid in 1948. During the ten years beginning with Barredo's joining Opus Dei in 1933 and ending with Isidoro's death, the two had been close friends. Barredo, like St. Josemaría and many other people who had known Zorzano, was convinced that he was a saint, and immediately began to ask his intercession for both spiritual and material needs.

In the United States, Barredo liked to give people printed cards with a picture of Isidoro, a very short biographical sketch, and a prayer asking his intercession⁶⁶. He described the cards as very effective and asked for copies «in any language» since he found himself «surrounded by people from all over the world»⁶⁷. While waiting to see Cardinal Stritch, he struck up a conversation with the Papal Envoy to Colombia who ended up asking for a

⁶² Barredo to Federico Suárez, 461022, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁶³ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 461022, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁶⁴ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470827, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

⁶⁵ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470621, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

⁶⁶ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471023 AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

⁶⁷ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 480630, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

prayer card. «Not bad», he commented, «that devotion to Isidoro in Colombia should begin with the Papal Envoy»⁶⁸.

During a trip to Boston in summer 1948, Barredo went to St. Benedict's Center where he met the chaplain, Fr. Leonard Feeney, S.J. Fr. Feeney would later take an extreme position on the possibility of salvation without formal membership in the Church, but in 1948 he was known as a highly successful chaplain who had won many converts and provoked many decisions to enter the priesthood and the religious life⁶⁹. Feeney introduced Barredo to Daniel Sargent, a prominent Catholic intellectual and author who had written a best-selling biography of St. Thomas More⁷⁰. Sargent accepted Barredo's suggestion that he write a biography of Isidoro Zorzano, and his book *God's Engineer. The Life of Isidoro Zorzano* was published in 1954. It helped a generation of Americans to come to know Opus Dei better.

Barredo had no hesitation about talking about delicate topics. While having dinner at the house of a friend who lived on the West Side of Manhattan near the Hudson River, it came out that his hosts were in favor of birth control. He told them that if they could make the Hudson flood Manhattan it wouldn't matter that much because people would be saved one way or the other. But if you avoid the birth of a child, he said, you can't tell what harm you're doing. His hosts were convinced and sometime later they had another baby. «Now they love me», he said, «as if I had given them their child»⁷¹.

Of course not everyone reacted favorably to Barredo's forthright style, which some considered brash. During a visit to a Catholic Cancer Institute in Cincinnati, he asked a Chilean he was working with if he was Catholic. The man responded that he had been but was no longer and would never be again. The co-director of the Institute took Barredo aside and told him that in the United States he should never ask anyone about his religion⁷². A priest friend who taught canon law at Catholic University told him not to worry

⁶⁸ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490104, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁶⁹ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer 490805 AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4. Shortly after Fr. Joseph Múzquiz arrived in the United States, Barredo introduced him to Fr. Feeney, and Fr. Joseph gave a lecture at St. Benedict's Center. Although the lecture was well received, Fr. Joseph was put off by something about the atmosphere of the center. He wrote to St. Josemaría: "In time perhaps people can come [to the Work] from this center, and they certainly have affection for us, but we should begin with people who are less pious, if that's the right description for them." AGP, JMM, A-490220.

⁷⁰ Algunos contactos.

⁷¹ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá, 471004, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

⁷² Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471025, AGP, serie M.1.1 C1138 B-1.

about it and to chalk it up to experience. But he added that even as a priest he was very slow to speak about religion and never talked about it unless others brought it up⁷³. His advice did not cause Barredo to change and throughout his life he remained bold in his approach to people.

2. *Contacts with Members of the Hierarchy*

From the beginning of his vocation to Opus Dei, Barredo had learned that the Work is, as its Founder liked to put it «a little part of the Church» and that its goal is «to ‘serve’ the Church of God most faithfully»⁷⁴. He understood that it is «an essential part of the Christian spirit ...to live in union with the ordinary hierarchy — the Pope and the bishops»⁷⁵. For these reasons, he made a point of contacting the representatives of the Holy See and the bishops wherever he went.

On his way to the United States in February 1946, he took advantage of stops to visit the Bishop in Curaçao⁷⁶ and the Papal Nuncio in Havana⁷⁷. On his first trip to Washington, D.C. he visited the Pope’s representative, the Apostolic Delegate, Amleto Cicognani, whose brother Gaetano was serving as the Pope’s representative in Madrid. The Nuncio in Madrid had promised to write to his brother introducing Barredo. When Barredo paid his first visit, however, the letter had not arrived and his reception was frosty. Barredo surmised the Apostolic Delegate probably thought he was a Marxist professor fleeing from Franco’s Spain⁷⁸. Later visits went much better, and by summer of 1947 he was on such good terms with the Apostolic Delegate and his staff that he could pay a visit to ask them to pray that Americans join Opus Dei⁷⁹. One of the officials of the Delegation, the future Cardinal

⁷³ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471025, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

⁷⁴ Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, n. 519.

⁷⁵ Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, n. 61.

⁷⁶ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer [telegram], 460223, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁷⁷ Barredo to PO Box [Post card, no name], 460303, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁷⁸ Algunos contactos. Seeing the Naval Observatory on the other side of Massachusetts Avenue as he left the Apostolic Delegation, Barredo was reminded of a tapestry in Opus Dei’s Ferraz Center that bore the motto “Per aspera ad astra” [Through hardships to the stars].

⁷⁹ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470811, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-2.

Luigi Raimondi, suggested that Chicago would be an especially good place for Opus Dei to open its first center⁸⁰.

While attending a meeting of the American Physical Society at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin, Barredo met the recently appointed bishop William O'Connor. They talked about the situation of the university and about Opus Dei⁸¹. Bishop O'Connor became very enthusiastic and some years later urged Fr. Joseph Múzquiz to open a center there. With his help, Opus Dei started a student residence in Madison in 1955⁸².

On a professional trip to Los Angeles, Barredo met the Archbishop, the future Cardinal James McIntyre. Barredo found him well disposed toward Opus Dei but thought it would take him some time to understand it⁸³.

The member of the hierarchy with whom Barredo had most contact was the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Stritch. During his first appointment, he asked the Cardinal for permission to have a student residence with a chapel at the University of Chicago. He also requested an imprimatur for an American edition of *The Way* together with a foreword. Finally he asked the Cardinal for the money he needed to buy a house to convert into a student residence⁸⁴. A few months later he sought and obtained Stritch's permission to publish a card with a prayer for private devotion to Isidoro Zorzano. When he learned that Fr. Joseph Múzquiz would be coming to the United States, he asked the Cardinal to put in an official request for him to come to Chicago so he could obtain a resident visa⁸⁵.

3. Looking for new members of Opus Dei

Barredo was interested in bringing closer to God people of all ages and from all walks of life. He was especially keen, however, to find young men who could dedicate their lives to living Opus Dei's message of sanctity in ordinary life and to spreading it to others. On the ship he took from Lisbon to New York he met a couple who lived in Mexico and learned that they had a college-age son in Spain. He suggested that the boy might visit the Moncloa

⁸⁰ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 480521, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁸¹ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 480621, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁸² COVERDALE, *Putting Down Roots*, p. 88.

⁸³ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490105, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁸⁴ Algunos contactos. Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 480712, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁸⁵ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490105, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

University Residence which Opus Dei ran in Madrid. «If he were to join the Work», he wrote to the director of the residence, «he could do well in Mexico because his parents are well established there»⁸⁶.

In attempting to find potential members to Opus Dei, Barredo faced serious challenges. Opus Dei was completely unknown in the United States. It had the full backing and approval of the Archbishop of Madrid, but until February 1947 it had not been formally approved by the Holy See. Even once it was approved by the Pope, its message of holiness in the world and the idea of embracing celibacy and dedicating one's entire life to God without becoming a priest or a religious were shockingly novel to American Catholics. Although many went to Mass and prayed the Rosary, a call to lead a deep interior life of prayer and sacrifice in the midst of the world while holding down a normal job seemed incomprehensible to most⁸⁷.

In addition to these difficulties that were inherent in starting Opus Dei in the United States in the 1940s, Barredo faced other obstacles. During the early months of his stay in the United States, when he lived in Graduate House at MIT, he was surrounded by students. They were, however, all masters or doctoral candidates which made them older than what he considered ideal for understanding something as novel as Opus Dei and for having the generosity and daring to dedicate ones entire life to it⁸⁸. Once he left MIT's Graduate House, Barredo, who was forty years old, had few natural contacts with students of any age.

Barredo's English was quite limited⁸⁹. A year and a half after arriving he told Pedro Casciaro that he found it much harder to talk in English about vocation to the Work than about chemistry⁹⁰. In the immediate aftermath of a brutal war against Nazism and Fascism, Franco's Spain was generally viewed with disfavor. It was not allowed to join the United Nations until 1955 and was excluded from the Marshall Plan. Spaniards and things con-

⁸⁶ Barredo to Antonio Huerta, 460211, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁸⁷ Cfr. COVERDALE, *Putting Down Roots*, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁸ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 460603, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁸⁹ Despite this limitation, Barredo had a knack for explaining things in clear and attractive ways. In response to an objection that it would be hard to draw up rules for married members, for instance, Barredo simply replied, «Do you have a hard time drawing up rules for dealing with your wife and children?». Barredo to José María Hernández Garnica, 461112, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁹⁰ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470823, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B -1.

nected with Spain faced an uphill battle in winning acceptance in the United States.

Barredo was alone and a layman. American Catholics were accustomed to looking almost exclusively to the clergy for guidance in spiritual matters. Although Barredo received support from a number of American priests, none of them understood Opus Dei in depth and they could not be counted on to give well-informed advice to young men who might think God could be calling them to join Opus Dei.

Barredo was quite undaunted by these obstacles. He was convinced that Opus Dei was truly a work of God and that God wanted it to develop in the United States. He understood that finding new members was mostly a matter of God's grace, and that grace is won by prayer and sacrifice. He was acutely aware of St. Josemaría's admonition in *The Way*: «First, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place, very much 'in the third place', action»⁹¹.

Nonetheless, he also understood that action was indispensable. No sooner had he landed in New York than he began to think about the possibility of arranging for students to go to Spain to study⁹². There they could meet members of the Work of their own age and possibly receive a vocation. He returned frequently to this idea, talking about it with former Ambassador Hayes, and with Fr. Francesco Lardone, a professor at Catholic University to whom he was introduced by someone at the Apostolic Delegation and on whose advice he often relied⁹³. He soon realized that for high school students this would be difficult because of differences between the curriculum in Spain and the United States⁹⁴. Nonetheless, he made a trip from Washington to New York to see if he could arrange a scholarship for a high school student he had met in Washington, but with no success⁹⁵.

After moving to Chicago he got to know two students who were just finishing high school and were interested in the possibility of attending a Spanish university. He believed that \$1000 a year would cover all expenses for a college student, and that if they studied Spanish literature they would be positioned when they returned to get a job at a top American University⁹⁶.

⁹¹ Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way*, n. 82.

⁹² Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 460216, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

⁹³ Lardone would soon be named Papal representative in Haiti and the Dominican Republic and later in Peru and then Turkey.

⁹⁴ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470261, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

⁹⁵ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470802, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

⁹⁶ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470927, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1. Barredo to Josemaría

Although nothing came of these plans, they are an index of Barredo's zeal and creativity.

In Spain members of Opus Dei had opened a number of student residences near major universities. They offered a homelike environment, an atmosphere of serious study, and an opportunity for those who wished to receive the sacraments and Christian formation. These residences had greatly facilitated Opus Dei's apostolate with students. Early in 1948 Barredo began thinking of duplicating that experience on a small scale near the University of Chicago. At first he thought of simply renting an apartment whose expenses could be covered by the rent charged the residents⁹⁷. He asked the Chaplain of the Catholic Club at the University of Chicago to help him find residents⁹⁸.

After talking with Pedro Casciaro during his visit to the United States, he decided on a more ambitious plan of acquiring a large house near the university which could accommodate more students. By the end of March 1948 he had recruited at least one student to help him look for a house⁹⁹. The Chaplain of the Catholic Club, whose aid he tried to enlist in the new project, complained that every time they talked he had a new plan¹⁰⁰. By the end of May he located a house. The asking price of \$50,000 (about \$500,000 in current dollars) was completely out of his range, but Barredo was unfazed. He suggested to Pedro Casciaro that they ask Isidoro to find the money as a present for Barredo's birthday which was coming up the next week¹⁰¹.

A few weeks later, in a meeting with Cardinal Stritch, he asked the Cardinal for \$47,500 so he could buy the house. As an alternative, he suggested that the diocese purchase the house and let the Work use it for two years. The Cardinal said he would need to talk to the chaplain of the Calvert Club, but Barredo thought he seemed well disposed¹⁰². At another meeting later that summer the Cardinal said he hadn't reached a decision yet because he had not had a chance to talk with the chaplain, but Barredo continued to be optimistic¹⁰³. Less than a year later and less than six months after the arrival

Escrivá de Balaguer, 490318, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁹⁷ Barredo to Álvaro del Portillo, 480408 AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁹⁸ Barredo to Álvaro del Portillo, 480408 AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

⁹⁹ Barredo to Fernando Martínez, 480328, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹⁰⁰ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 480524, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹⁰¹ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 480531, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹⁰² Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 480712, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹⁰³ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 480818, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

of José Luis Múzquiz, Sal Ferigle and others, these plans would come to fruition with the purchase of Woodlawn Residence¹⁰⁴.

Barredo met a number of people who he thought might have a calling to Opus Dei. During summer 1946 he mentioned Ambassador Hayes's son¹⁰⁵ and a 28 year old Belgian American who had a PhD and was close to getting a position at MIT¹⁰⁶. He prayed for them with the conviction that if they proved not to have a calling to Opus Dei the prayers would go to someone else¹⁰⁷.

In Washington he asked at the parish church he attended if there might be a student who would be interested in conversation as a way of learning Spanish and helping him improve his English. In this way he met an Irish family with three sons. In addition to praying for them himself, Barredo repeatedly requested prayers from other members of the Work¹⁰⁸. The eldest showed considerable interest in Opus Dei but his Protestant mother discouraged him from joining¹⁰⁹.

In Fall 1947 Barredo learned that Fr. William Kane, OP, a professor at the Dominican novitiate in River Forest, Illinois, was in touch with a group of students who might be interested in Opus Dei¹¹⁰. Barredo decided to go to Chicago to meet them, with the idea of moving there if they proved promising¹¹¹. It turned out that the students in question wanted to form a new religious order and understood that since Opus Dei was not a religious order it was not for them¹¹².

At the University of Chicago, Barredo met some students involved in the Catholic Club. He was very impressed with the club's president, a 22 year old student working on a doctorate in physical chemistry. He told him that a few students there wanted to dedicate their entire lives to God as if they

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. COVERDALE, *Putting Down Roots*, pp. 52-58.

¹⁰⁵ Barredo to José María Albareda, 460718, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

¹⁰⁶ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 460606, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

¹⁰⁷ Barredo to José María Albareda, 460718, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-1.

¹⁰⁸ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470625, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2; Barredo to Juan Galarraga, 470811, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

¹⁰⁹ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470625, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2, Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470802, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1, Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 470812, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1, Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 470830, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1 Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471023, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

¹¹⁰ Algunos contactos.

¹¹¹ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471028, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

¹¹² Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471221, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

had taken vows and to dedicate themselves to apostolate at the university¹¹³. For a time, Barredo met regularly with him and explained Opus Dei to him, suggesting that he ask Our Lady if he had a vocation¹¹⁴. Eventually, however, neither he nor the other University of Chicago students Barredo met in 1947-48 joined Opus Dei.

During summer 1948, Barredo heard about a Medical student at Loyola University in Chicago who sounded like he might be interested in Opus Dei. When he finally managed to meet him and explain Opus Dei to him, the student was enthused. He had felt torn between dedicating his life to God as a priest and continuing with his plans to become a doctor. He felt that in some ways a doctor might be able to do more for God because patients listen to him without discounting what he says as they might do with a priest whom they think of as obliged to talk about God. Opus Dei seemed at first the answer to his dilemma, but when he came to understand the full extent of the commitment required as a member of the Work he told Barredo that he just didn't see clearly his vocation¹¹⁵.

Barredo gave a talk to the Association of Professors of Catholic Universities and Schools of Illinois¹¹⁶. There he met a professor from Marmion Academy, a Benedictine military high school in Aurora Illinois. He invited Barredo to give a lecture at the school. Two students showed considerable interest in the possibility of studying in Spain. Those plans did not work out, but one of the students remained in close contact with Barredo and for a time after Fr. Joseph's arrival it seemed that he might be the first member of Opus Dei in the United States¹¹⁷. Barredo's contacts at Marmion did eventually bear fruit. Some years later, a Marmion student, Hector Reynal, joined Opus Dei.

Reinforcements

In Fall 1948, St. Josemaría decided that the time had come to establish a center of Opus Dei in the United States; so he asked Joseph Múzquiz, one of the first three priests ordained for Opus Dei, to go there. Múzquiz

¹¹³ Barredo to Pedro Casciaro, 471109, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-1.

¹¹⁴ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 470103, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 A-2.

¹¹⁵ Barredo to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, 480726, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹¹⁶ Algunos contactos.

¹¹⁷ Cfr. COVERDALE, *Putting Down Roots*, p. 50.

recruited three young lay members of the Work to accompany him¹¹⁸. As soon as he heard the news, Barredo set to work to facilitate their coming. Visas were a major issue. In early January, Barredo visited Fr. Comerford O'Mally, CM, the President of De Paul University in Chicago to ask him to solicit Fr. Joseph's coming, but Fr. O'Mally declined to do so¹¹⁹. Barredo also requested a meeting with Cardinal Stritch to ask him to do the same thing, but was told the Cardinal was leaving for Florida and could not see him. Barredo prayed to Isidoro Zorzano that the trip be delayed and a few hours later heard that it had in fact been delayed and that the Cardinal would be able to see him¹²⁰. The Cardinal seems to have agreed to sign the necessary papers¹²¹, but did not get around to doing so before leaving Chicago¹²². Eventually Múzquiz came on a tourist visa, which he was later able to convert to an immigrant one¹²³.

For the three laymen who would be coming, Barredo tried to make arrangements at the Illinois Institute of Technology¹²⁴. At least in the case of Salvador Martínez Ferigle (who after his ordination in 1957 would be known in the United States as Fr. Sal) he was successful. Sal obtained his doctorate in physics at IIT in 1952.

On February 17, 1949 Father Joseph and Sal arrived in New York. Barredo, who had traveled to New York to meet them, wrote to St. Josemaría: «They have arrived. ... Now that they are here, everything will go well».

John F. Coverdale. Professor of Law at Seton Hall University School of Law, Newark, New York. He has taught Spanish History at Princeton and Northwestern. He lived and worked in Rome with St. Josemaría Escrivá from 1960 to 1968. Among other books, he is the author of *Uncommon Faith. The Early Years of Opus Dei* (Scepter, 2002), *Putting Down Roots : Father Joseph Múzquiz and the growth of Opus Dei* (Scepter, 2009), and *Saxum. The Life of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo* (Scepter, 2014).
e-mail: coverdale.john@gmail.com

¹¹⁸ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹¹⁹ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490105, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹²⁰ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490105, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹²¹ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490105, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹²² Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490204, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.

¹²³ Cfr. COVERDALE, *Putting Down Roots*, p. 45.

¹²⁴ Barredo to José Luis Múzquiz, 490105, AGP, serie M.1.1 C 1138 B-4.