

## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1941.

**10th July.** Montserrat Grases was born.

**19th July.** She was baptized in the Church of Our Lady of the Pillar in Barcelona.

1944.

**11th June.** Dr. Juan Perello, Bishop of Vic, confirmed the three Grases children: Enrique, Montse and Jorge.

1946.

**October.** Montse went to Jesus-Mary School.

1948.

**27th May.** Montse made her First Holy Communion in the school chapel.

1949.

**August.** Montse moved to the School of the Child Jesus close to her home.

1955.

**October.** Montse went for the first time to Llar, the first Home Economics School run by women of Opus Dei.

1956.

**4th October.** She enrolled in the Professional School for Women in Barcelona, doing home training, cooking, drawing, sewing and design.

1957.

**24th December.** Montse asked to be admitted to Opus Dei as a Numerary member.

1958.

**20th June.** The doctor told Manuel Grases that his daughter suffered from Ewing's sarcoma, an irreversible and fatal cancer. Radiation therapy began at once.

**20th July.** Montse's parents told her about the gravity of her illness and she reacted very supernaturally, abandoning her life in God's hands.

**11th-17th November.** Montse travelled to Rome to pray close to the Pope and meet the Founder of Opus Dei.

1959.

**8th March.** She received the Anointing of the Sick. Many people went to see her and were moved by her love for God, her joy and apostolic zeal.

**26th March (Holy Thursday).** She died at 1:20 p.m.

Immediately after her death, her reputation for holiness spread throughout the world. Within a short time, prayer cards and informative bulletins about her life were printed in different languages.

1962.

**19th December.** The first session of the Information Process for the Canonization of the Servant of God Montserrat Grases took place presided by the Most Reverend Gregorio Modrego, Archbishop of the Diocese.

1968.

**26th March.** The Information Process for the Canonization ended in the Church of Our Lady of Montalegre in Barcelona presided by the Most Reverend Gregorio Modrego, the retired Archbishop of Barcelona. The Copy of the Process was then immediately sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

1974.

**22nd February.** The Congregation for the Causes of Saints issued its Decree on the writings.

1992.

**15th May.** The Congregation for the Causes of Saints issued the Decree declaring the validity of the Process.

### PRAYER

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

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

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



The Servant of God

# MONTSE GRASES

Vice-Postulation of Opus Dei in Australia



## SHE ASKED TO BE ADMITTED IN OPUS DEI<sup>1</sup>

"Mama, I think God is calling me."

When she heard those words from the lips of her daughter, Manolita became anxious. Undoubtedly, what she had just heard excited her. She had always dreamt of having a priest son; there was Enrique<sup>2</sup> ... She had always desired in the depths of her heart that her children give themselves to God; now, Montse... She tells her:

"But have you thought about it very well?"

"Yes, yes, yes, mama. God is calling me and I want to ask for admission to Opus Dei, as a numerary."

What could she tell her? Montse looked at her waiting for a response. What response could she give her? There is nothing as delicate as the vocation that is born in a young soul. What was she to do? Manolita knew that it was not advisable to delay young people in their self-giving and that when God calls, one has to say yes. She also knew that parents compromise their soul when they put grave obstacles to the vocation of their children.<sup>3</sup>

It was December 22, 1957 and Manolita continued observing Montse. Montse was different. She was happy but anxious. She continued thinking about her vocation. She was almost decided, but from time to time she would doubt. Was God really calling her? Or was it just a dream?

Two days later, in the afternoon of the 24th, Christmas eve, Pepa<sup>4</sup> and Montse talked again about her vocation. "She was decided to be in Opus Dei but she was restrained by her fear of not persevering," Pepa recalled. Who can assure her perseverance? And what if she loses enthusiasm?

Montse abandoned herself into the hands of God and she decided to give herself. There was no need to think about it over and over again. God called her to Opus Dei.

She returned to Llar<sup>5</sup> jubilant and contented. Upon arrival, as was her custom, she greeted the Blessed Sacrament. She was totally decided and happy, although a little nervous.

At last, she opened the door of the office of Lia<sup>6</sup> and Montse approached her with decisiveness. She was not carried away by her feelings at that moment; it was not the fruit of a fleeting excitement. Montse was calm and did not decide because of sudden impulse. Lia knew her well. It has been some time since Montse started following a demanding plan of spiritual life and she had gone regularly for spiritual direction with a priest. Hers was a matured, meditated, and deeply free decision: it was something of God.

After pondering about it and considering it in the presence of God, Lia was convinced of the spiritual maturity of that young girl and of her sincere desire of self-giving and of struggle. She knew that she wanted to ask admission to Opus Dei in order to serve the Church, to sanctify herself in her ordinary work, to struggle for love up to the last instant. Thus, she permitted Montse to ask admission to Opus Dei by means of a handwritten letter to the Founder, written with a familiar tone proper of the Work.<sup>7</sup>

On her way home, everything seemed beautiful. Yes, everything was more beautiful in those days: it was the happiest Christmas of her life: precisely on Christmas when God gives himself for love, she had given herself freely—also for love of God! How eager she was to tell it to her parents.

"Well, we are also in Opus Dei," they responded to her.

"Really? You, too? How lucky, how lucky!"

"She was at the point of bursting with joy and of gratitude to God," commented her mother.

<sup>1</sup>This article follows and summarizes the narration of J.M. Cejas in "Montse Grases. La alegría de la entrega" Madrid 1993, pp. 245-253.

<sup>2</sup>Enrique Grases, then a seminarian, is now a priest of the Archdiocese of Barcelona.

<sup>3</sup>The call of Christ does not contradict the first commandment (love of God) with the fourth (love for the parents). It establishes a hierarchy: one has to put in the first place the love of God. Love for your parents—as recommended by St. Augustine—is to put God before parents(...). Parents have to be honored, but God should be obeyed. (Sermon, 100.2)

<sup>4</sup>Pepa Castello had sought admission to Opus Dei seven years earlier.

<sup>5</sup>This was the name of the Center for Women of Opus Dei, where Montse would go frequently. It was a small flat in the Muntaner Street of Barcelona, near the Adriano Square.

<sup>6</sup>Lia (Emilia) Vila Burch was the directress of Llar. She died in June 1988.

<sup>7</sup>Montse was 16 years old when she asked for admission.

## SIMPLICITY IN ORDINARY THINGS

In March 1959, a few days after Montse had gone to heaven, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá wrote to his children: "what is extraordinary for us is the ordinary: the ordinary done with perfection. Smile always, overlook -also in a humanly elegant way- what bothers you, what hurts you. Be generous without measure. That is to say: turn our life into a continual prayer."

Words such as these were often repeated by the Founder of Opus Dei. In clear and simple terms they open up the panorama of a life dedicated to God in the world, to the extent that God asks of each one. Later on, Vatican Council II set forth clearly that holiness for those living immersed in the world, for the ordinary faithful, priests and laity, men and women, young and old, is to be found in just this: *For all their works, prayers and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit (...)*

*all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

There is no doubt that those who had seen Montse die could see how aptly these words of Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá described her whole life. For that was just how she tried to become holy.

A complete biography of Montse's life has recently been published. It can be read easily and is at times very moving. It describes an uneventful life where practically nothing out of the ordinary happened. But it was a life very responsive to whatever God was asking in each moment. Montse thought it was all very ordinary, although much was heroic because it was hidden in a smile which is a manifestation of a generosity without limits.

It is in this way that all of us can turn our lives into a continual prayer.



One of her last photos with her mother.



## THE CHRISTIAN MEANING OF SUFFERING

In order to make amends for the sins of men and offer to his Father in Heaven an infinite satisfaction, the Son of God assumed our human nature and wanted to die on the wood of the Cross, after having borne with charity and immense patience the most bitter of sufferings. "Upon giving up his Son for our sins, God manifested his plan for us in a design of benevolent love which preceded all merit on our part."<sup>1</sup>

From that moment on, that Cross illumines completely the mystery of suffering and the death of a Christian. As affirmed by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, "it is not true that pain, poverty and work are punishments. It is not true. These are instruments of God."<sup>2</sup>

Montse Grases understood very well this fundamental mystery of Christianity. That is why, then the moment came for the great trial, in the acceptance of her illness, she reacted with so much simplicity, naturalness and abandonment in God.

In July 1958, upon seeing the progressive deterioration of her illness, Montse asked her parents, Manuel and Manolita, the true nature of the illness that she was suffering. But, the opportune moment of having a serious conversation never came. At last, on a Sunday, upon their return from Seva—a town in the province of Barcelona where the family spent their summer vacation—in spite of being so late because of the train delay, Montse insisted in asking. Her mother described the scene later to her other children.

"It was precisely on that day, or better said, that night, upon arriving home—it must have been one o'clock—when she asked us for the answer to the question that she had asked many times. 'What am I

sick of?' There were three of us then. And immediately I said: "Montse it's quite late." That did not work. This time the answer could not be postponed further; besides, your father intervened. He explained it to her in a very clear manner. She understood it immediately and asked: 'And if they cut my leg?' She said it in the most natural way, without changing her facial expression. Your father had to tell her that they had thought about it, but it was going to be futile, so they had disregarded it. Then she made a gesture which she used to do. You can imagine what your father told her: that the doctors could not do anything more, and so we were there to ask God for a cure, which was our obligation.

She came out apparently serene, went to her room and lied in her bed. When I saw her, I laid down beside her, convinced that what she had not yet done—cry and unburden her emotions—she would do as soon as she finds herself alone. She asked me, with a mixture of surprise and cheerfulness: 'What are you doing, Mama?' I don't remember what exactly I told her; it was something like this: "Well, I will stay with you." We did not say a word. She put her head on my shoulder, and in a few minutes I heard her breath deeply: she was asleep."

The next day, Montse explained to Lia what had happened: "Mama expected me to say something, but I could not think of anything to say. When I went to my room, I knelt before the Virgin, and I said, 'Serviam! I will serve,' and then I slept."

"It was a change without metamorphosis," explained Lia. "it was so sudden. I always saw God in all that was happening in those days and many times I felt him very near."

<sup>1</sup>Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 604.

<sup>2</sup>RHF 20770, p. 168.



During a seminar in Castelldaura

## MONTSE IN ROME

From the 11th to 17th of November 1958, although she was already gravely ill, Montse was able to travel to Rome and meet Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, Founder of Opus Dei. Those who lived with her during her stay in the Eternal City have unforgettable memories of the days she spent there.

"I went to meet her at the airport with several others whose names I cannot recall," says Encarnación Ortega, who was at that time the Central Directress for the women in Opus Dei. "I remember that Montse arrived feeling sick and we sat down for a while so she would feel better. Some journalists approached us to ask if she was a film star. No doubt it was our enthusiastic welcome and her good looks that caught their attention."

Shortly after arriving in Rome she went to St. Peter's Basilica. Encarnación Ortega had told her that the Founder of the Work had taught them that the first visit of the members of the Work arriving in Rome should be to St. Peter's to recite the Creed and to pray for the Roman Pontiff. In Montse's case, it was the only visit she made.

"During the days she was in Rome her joy in the moments we were all together and her great simplicity and trust were particularly noticeable," she continued. "I remember that one day we handed around a box of sweets; she had lost all her appetite and did not take any, but very simply and naturally commented: 'I am not having any but I can show you the good ones; I know them very well' and she pointed out those she thought were the best."

Msgr. Escrivá was very moved when they met. Encarnita was present. "I accompanied her and I noticed that the Founder of the Work wore dark glasses, probably to hide his emotion at being with that daughter of his. Montse had taken special care of her appearance for this meeting; even though it cost her an effort because of her illness she wore high heels and a new pale blue sweater which really suited her.

Our Father asked about her trip and how her family was. Then he spoke about her sickness; he told her to ask our Lord to cure her and that she should promise our Lord that if he cured her she would be faithful all her life, and that right away she should abandon herself in His hands with the conviction that our Lord would do what was best for her. When he was about to give her the blessing, Montse wanted to kneel, but the Founder of the Work would not let her. He put his hands on her head and made the sign of the cross on her forehead. As he was leaving the room he turned to look at her with all the tenderness of his fatherly heart.

While we were together, our Father wanted a photograph taken to recall those moments. Elena Serrano took it and we sent it afterwards to Montse. It helped

her and gave her fortitude during her illness: she had it in front of her and prayed for Msgr. Escrivá's intentions."

Encarnita Ortega also recalls that "the Founder of the Work had told me to talk to her, gently but clearly, about the progress of her illness, to help her draw all the supernatural fruit from it and prepare herself to win the last struggle. I did it just as gently and clearly as I could. She told me that she was afraid of physical pain but added: "I think that if I am faithful to what God asks of me each day, He will give me His grace." That was when I realized the depth with which she understood herself to be a child of God, while at the same time showing in a very human and simple way her fear of pain."

Nevertheless, in spite of this conversation, Encarnita, as others in different moments, doubted if Montse really realized that she was soon to die if God did not ordain otherwise. "When I saw her so obviously happy all the time," she said, "I thought that maybe my explanation had not been sufficiently clear, and before she left I asked her if she was ready for anything. She smiled and said yes. Later she sent me a postcard which read: Great trip. Everything fine. I am about to arrive and ready for anything; it is all worthwhile."

A few weeks later, in Holy Week, the news arrived in Rome of Montse's saintly death. When the Founder heard it he wrote her parents a letter saying: "I cannot give my condolences because—even though it is hard for us—we have to consider joyfully that now we have this daughter in Heaven and that she is watching over us."



With the Founder of Opus Dei, Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, in Rome



## FAVORS

### Studying Telecommunications

My second child was born three months early and only weighed 2.5 kilos. Shortly after birth he was found to have a brain hemorrhage which led to serious breathing difficulties. Doctors told me that because his brain was affected he had no use of his muscles. He breathed with great difficulty, gasping for air.

A chest X-ray was taken and showed that a lung was collapsed as if it was unopened up. His breathing was so labored I asked that he be taken away from my room because I could not bear listening to my son die without being able to do anything. There were no rooms free in the hospital so he had to stay.

When I was alone with my newborn son I begged Montse Grases' intercession with enormous faith. I had known her and been close to her in the last years of her life between 1957 and 1959, and I knew her Cause of Canonization had begun. I asked her to save my son's life.

Within a short time his gasping became calmer until the noise completely faded away. The doctor on duty came into the room and noticed that the baby really showed signs of muscle tone.

Ten or twelve hours later another chest X-ray was taken and the lung was completely normal. From that moment on my son's growth was completely normal.

Right after birth, in view of the gravity of his condition we had asked a renowned consultant with whom we were in contact to see him. When he arrived, he found the child perfectly recovered. At first, he did not understand why we had called him so urgently, but when he saw the X-ray taken a few hours earlier he admitted that he had never seen such a tightly closed lung and was surprised at the recovery.

When we brought the baby to church to solemnize his baptism (a nurse had baptised him in emergency at birth) we named him after his father, and for a second name we chose Salvador, because we considered him to be a miracle baby.

Today that baby is studying Telecommunications and getting very good grades. There are no consequences of the brain damage he had at birth.

I have always attributed his cure to the intercession of Montse Grases to whom I turned with such faith in those terrible moments.

C.F.B.

My friend and I organized a sports activity. We were going to the beach to teach our friends in college how to snorkel. However, we only had one set of mask and snorkel and we were around twenty in the group. We

tried looking for stores that could rent these but did not find any. Besides, we did not have money for renting.

Later, I remembered that one of my cousins was a scuba diver and surely had several of these gear. I was hesitant to call her, however, because I was not close to her and also because I knew that divers are extra careful with their own gear. Before calling her up, I prayed the prayer card of Montse several times. I was confident that she would help me because she enjoyed sports too during her lifetime.

Surprisingly, my cousin lent me her gear (all of them) and even referred me to a friend of hers who, likewise, lent us his gear although he did not really know us.

I am sure that Montse helped us here and am thankful to her.

R.C. (Manila, May 1995)



Summer of 1956 in Montseny

Dr. P. is a very hard working lady, although many of her colleagues find her unaccommodating especially when she has a lot of pressure from work. On one occasion, I had to write an urgent report which needed vital information from her. It could have been one of those days when she had her moods. I asked myself, "now, how shall I make this request from this woman?" I remembered praying to Montse asking her intercession for this specific small favor. I mentally formulated a prayer immediately as I approached her office. To my surprise, she was very affable to me. She not only gave me the information I needed but she also served me coffee.

I would like to request the Vice-Postulation Office of Opus Dei to send me prayer cards of Montse in order to spread the devotion to her.

J.O. (Singapore, January 1994)

For a long time I have been wanting to get in contact with the people responsible for the Cause of Beatification of Montse Grases, Montsita, or Little Montse as all my family affectionately call her. She has done so many favors for us over the years, -some of them really big ones- that I would have to write many pages to narrate them all.

M.G.A.

Two years ago, our first child was born with imperfect osteogenesis, a bone defect commonly referred to as "glass bone". The doctors who took care of her classified it as an extremely grave case and gave no hope for her survival.

We reproduce only paragraphs of some of the numerous letters we have received testifying to the intercession of the Servant of God in this Informative Bulletin because of limited space.

We are grateful for the donations for the expenses of the Vice-Postulation of Opus Dei in Australia.

### UPDATE ON THE CAUSE

The process of Canonization of the Servant of God Montserrat Grases Garcia was held in Barcelona from 1962 to 1968. On the 22nd of February 1974, the Holy See issued the Decree of Approval of its findings.

On the 15th of May 1992, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints gave its approval to the Process. Currently all the documentation referring to the Servant of God is being gathered in preparation for the *Positio super vita et virtutibus*.

I knew about Montse's life and death. I had somewhat sporadically prayed to her. This time I decided to do a novena, which I still continue today, praying for my daughter. She herself says goodnight to Jesus, our Lady and to a girl she calls Montse.

There is a series of X-rays showing the evolution of her bone development. Now she walks and moves like any other child.

We believe that Montse Grases is responsible for this miraculous recovery.

G.A. and J.V.

I am pleased to communicate that through Montse's intercession our Lord has granted me a very great grace.

On the 15th of November, I became ill with flu and lost my voice. When I recovered from it, I went again to a throat specialist who diagnosed paralysis of the left vocal chord. I was treated with no success. Two months later, I went to a specialist who recommended an injection of Teflon in the paralyzed muscle. That was when I began to pray to Montsita each day, begging her to give me the grace to be able to speak, since I am a teacher, and without a voice I could not work.

Three months later, little by little I recovered, until thinking that I was cured, I returned to the doctor who told me that the paralysis persisted and that it was strange that I should be able to speak. Now my voice is normal. The doctor affirms there is no scientific explanation for it. I enclose the medical report concerning this grace that I have received through Montse's intercession.

I gratefully ask for the early canonization of Montserrat.

M.C.