

What Can I Do For Christ?

by
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Foreword
by
Richard Cardinal Cushing

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Sanctity Practiced in the World

What zeal
men put into their
earthly affairs!
Dreaming of honors,
striving for riches,
bent on sensuality!
Men and women,
rich and poor,
old and middle-aged,
and young—
and even children:
all of them alike.
When
you and I
put the same zeal
into the affairs of our souls,
then
we'll have a living and operative faith;
and there will be no obstacle
that we cannot overcome
in our
apostolic undertakings.

This crisp, jolting point of meditation is just one of many contained in *The Way*.¹ This book, a religious classic of spiritual

¹ *The Way* was written for all Christians. Over a million copies have been printed in 28 languages. It has also been brailled. Copies are available from the *Scepter Press* (30 North LaSalle St. Chicago 2, Illinois, at \$2.50 or 95¢, paperback) and from *All Saints Press* (630 Fifth Avenue, New York City 20). paperback.

directives, was authored by the distinguished Monsignor José Maria Escrivá de Balaguer, founder of *Opus Dei*.

Back in 1928 Monsignor Escrivá, then a young Spanish priest working in Madrid, was filled with a keen realization that sanctity is for lay people as well as for religious, and that there is unlimited work to be done for God by lay people living in the world.

Accordingly, he set about gaining the interest of people from all walks of life in such an idea and in inspiring them towards a life of spiritual perfection in the world. The idea and its development took hold so firmly that today *Opus Dei* (The work of God) is an approved secular institute,² the first of its kind to be approved by the Church, by Pope Pius XII on June 16, 1950.

Men and women of 53 countries on all continents belong to *Opus Dei*. They are people of many races, various social conditions and of different mentalities, education and political affiliations. Membership³ is open to Catholic men and women, single and married who, although remaining in the world, wish to strive for spiritual perfection through the practice of the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity according to their state in life.

The members of *Opus Dei* enjoy the same complete freedom of opinion and action in professional, political, social and similar matters as all other Catholics do. In these human activities each member acts with complete independence from the association and follows his own personal opinions and preferences with no other limitations than those given by the dogmas and morals of the Church and the directives of the hierarchy for all Catholics.

They are ordinary men and women—teachers, farmers, doctors, housewives, engineers, laborers, nurses, mechanics, etc. who are bent towards living close to God and bringing His Truth and His Way into the environments of their own little corners of the world. Through prayer, through sacrifice, through good example and the practice of various charitable and apostolic endeavors, they are doing the work of God in His world.

² See *Secular Institutes*, page 484.

³ Diocesan priests may also belong to the association.

Although some members live in *Opus Dei* houses devoted to corporate activities, the majority live at home and work at their ordinary endeavors, skills and professions. Since they are not religious they do not wear a habit. They dress in the same way as their colleagues and other people in a similar social and professional status.

Besides these dedicated members *Opus Dei* has many associate members known as *Co-operators*. These are both Catholics and non-Catholics who assist the association by their prayers and sacrifices, by their volunteered efforts, professional or technical services, and by their financial assistance, scholarship endowments, etc.

Opus Dei has completely separated, independent divisions for men and women, each with its own hierarchy, administration and specific apostolates. Its headquarters—Curia—is located at Rome and its President General is Monsignor Escrivá.

In the United States the first *Opus Dei* house, *Woodlawn Residence*, was established with the blessing of Samuel Cardinal Stritch in 1949 at Chicago. Presently, its Central House for the Washington, D.C. region (eastern states) is at 2132 Wyoming Avenue, N.W. and its Central House for the Chicago region (the remainder of the United States) is at 5544 South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago 37, Ill. Information concerning *Opus Dei* may be obtained from either house.

Though each member primarily strives to be an ever more saintly lawyer, housewife, teacher, etc., the work of the association is also corporate, geared to the need of the time and the localities it serves. Thus, throughout the world *Opus Dei* conducts diverse activities to help people spiritually and charitably. Among these endeavors are hospitals, clinics and nursing schools; charitable and benevolent centers in missions and needy areas; high schools, technical institutes, colleges and universities; centers for retreats and professional seminars; student residences at universities; cultural and technical training schools for craftsmen and farmers; and home economics schools for women.

Among the *Opus Dei* units in the United States are *Windmoor*

House, a center for students attending the University of Notre Dame; *Randall House* for students attending the University of Wisconsin; *Trimount House* for students in Boston; *Layton House*, a center for men, primarily students, in the Milwaukee area; *Petawa Residence* for women students in Milwaukee; *Wespine House* for young men, primarily students, in the St. Louis area; *Woodlawn Residence* for men students at the University of Chicago; *Kenwood House*, a retreat center in the Chicago area; *Sherlake Center*, a cultural and artistic center in Chicago for women students and professional women; *Wynnview Summer Camp for Boys* at Randolph, Vt.; and *Shellbourne*, a conference center near Valparaiso, Indiana, designed for education, cultural and spiritual activities for students; professional workshops; summer courses; and days of recollection and retreats.

Though the endeavors of *Opus Dei* members—its individual and corporate projects—are important and far-reaching, still the institute's chief purpose is the sanctification of its members. Its founder and its directors teach this. Its members know this.

When someone, for example, congratulated Monsignor Escrivá because an *Opus Dei* member had been appointed to a high position in government, Monsignor interrupted the speaker, saying: "*The only thing I care about is that this son of mine be a saint.*"