

# St. Thomas More as Intercessor of Opus Dei

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**Abstract:** *St. Thomas More appears to have been chosen as the fourth saintly Intercessor of Opus Dei in mid-1954. Means and influences (especially publications) by which St. Josemaría might have come to relatively precocious knowledge of, and appreciation for, the English martyr before that date. Several ways in which the saint was an apposite Intercessor. Development of the Founder's regard for, and recourse to, him during visits to England 1958-62. A relic and a painting. A doubt. Changed circumstances in the early 1960s and the 1964 nomination of St. Catherine of Siena as fifth Intercessor, taking over a portion of St. Thomas More's intercessory role.*

**Keywords:** *St. Josemaría Escrivá – St. Thomas More – Intercessor – influences – England – London – Oxford – freedom – relic*

**San Tommaso Moro, intercessore dell'Opus Dei:** *San Tommaso Moro sembra che sia stato scelto quale quarto intercessore dell'Opus Dei a metà del 1954. Strumenti e le influenze (in particolar modo le pubblicazioni) attraverso i quali san Josemaría potrebbe essere arrivato ad una conoscenza relativamente precoce e ad un apprezzamento per il martire inglese prima di tale data. Molteplici ragioni per cui il santo fu considerato un intercessore adatto. Sviluppi della considerazione del fondatore per il santo ed il conseguente riferimento alla sua persona durante i suoi viaggi in Inghilterra negli anni 1958-1962. Una reliquia ed un dipinto. Un dubbio. Circostanze mutate nei primi anni '60 e, nel 1964, la nomina di santa Caterina da Siena quale quinto intercessore che assume una parte del ruolo di intercessione di san Tommaso Moro.*

**Keywords:** *San Josemaría Escrivá – San Tommaso Moro – intercessore – influenze – Inghilterra – Londra – Oxford – libertà – reliquia*

On 20 August 1959 *The Times* (London) published a feature article, the tenth in a series on ‘People to Watch’, under the heading ‘Spanish Founder of Opus Dei’. An anonymous ‘Special Correspondent’ – in fact the Catholic writer and publisher, Tom Burns – found St. Josemaría ‘a humane and happy character who would have had much in common with Sir Thomas More, whom, indeed, he has chosen as a patron saint’<sup>1</sup>. By that date St. Thomas More (1478-1535) had been for a few years already a saint to whom collective recourse was made in Opus Dei, and the Founder had in both 1958 and 1959 prayed in the Anglican church of St. Dunstan, Canterbury, where the martyr’s severed head had almost certainly been interred four centuries before.

In the course of the academic year 1953-1954 there was designed a tabernacle for the Oratory of Pentecost in Villa Tevere, the Central House of Opus Dei in Rome. The arrangement included, on the outer casing, symmetrically distributed representations of SS. Nicholas of Bari, Jean-Marie Vianney, Pius X – three hitherto chosen ‘Lesser Patrons’ of Opus Dei, soon to be styled ‘Intercessors’ –, and Thomas More. The Founder must have approved designs by summer 1954, when St. Pius X had just been canonised and thereby proposed for universal public devotion<sup>2</sup>. It is clear that St. Thomas More was added to the group of Intercessors, making up a four-some, no later – and probably not much earlier – than summer 1954<sup>3</sup>. The

\* The author gratefully acknowledges debts to Mgr. Richard Stork, Fr. Jorge Ipas, Fr. Constantino Anchel, Fr. James Pereiro, Fr. Francesc Castells, Mr. Jesús Gil Sáenz and, above all, Mr. Frank Mitjans who both undertook specific investigations for him in Rome and secured the help of others. The comments of two anonymous readers have also proved valuable. The interpretations, as well as the errors and infelicities, that have survived intelligent criticism are attributable to the author alone.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times* (London), 20 Aug. 1959, p. 9. Thomas Ferrier Burns (1906-1995) had seemingly agreed to write on condition that he meet St. Josemaría that summer, the printed text implying that the encounter had already taken place and that St. Thomas More had been discussed: Archivo General de la Prelatura, Rome [hereafter AGP], Sec. A, Leg. 0212, Carp. 03, Exp. 1: 11 pp., MS. testimony, ‘Londres 1959’, signed Juan Antonio Galarraga, Cádiz, 30 August 1975, p. 4. Cfr. Josemaría ESCRIVÁ DE BALAGUER, *Conversaciones con Monseñor Escrivá de Balaguer*. Edición crítico-histórica preparada bajo la dirección de José Luis ILLANES, Roma-Madrid, Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá – Rialp, 2012, pp. 16-17. On what the two saints had in common, see Dominique LE TOURNEAU, *Josemaría Escrivá et Thomas More: l’héroïsme au quotidien*, ‘Moreana’ 38, 147-48, Dec. 2001, pp. 25-40.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Andrés VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador del Opus Dei. Vida de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Madrid, Rialp, 1997-2003 [hereafter, VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*], vol. III, pp. 305-307.

<sup>3</sup> By July 1954 a painting was planned which would represent the four Intercessors around

completed tabernacle, which delighted St. Josemaría, was to be delivered on 29 September 1956<sup>4</sup>.

St. Josemaría had, certainly by 1954, determined that the geographical origins of Intercessors still to be nominated should reflect in some degree the universal reach of Opus Dei, then in rapid world-wide expansion. This stage called for frequent dealings with dicasteries of the Holy See *and* with secular or ‘civil’ authorities at various levels, such that the value of Intercessors for these two fields – St. Pius X and St. Thomas More – must have been manifest.

Stable work by faithful of Opus Dei in Great Britain had commenced on 28 December 1946, and that in English-speaking Ireland and the United States of America followed soon after. This presence in the Anglophone world may have suggested – to put it no more strongly – some appropriateness in nominating an English-speaking Intercessor.

There may even have been – although this is but speculative – an element of considered ‘reparation’ in his approach to England, as was certainly the case otherwise with France. The Founder remarked on occasion of the great love he had developed for France, partly by way of compensation for hatred of that country common among Spaniards in his youth on account of historic hostilities as well as religious reasons<sup>5</sup>. The case had not been very different with England (or Britain). When a Gibraltar-born English Catholic bishop, Peter Amigo, offered his services to the British Government in 1915 to assist in securing Spanish neutrality in World War I, he was encouraged to tour the country and report. Having done so he noted a continuing resentment over the role Britain had played in Spain’s disaster year of 1898, and considerable sympathy for Germany and Austria among military and clergy. The latter – and many layfolk – had been encouraged by German propaganda that played upon their detestation of French anticlerical secularism to view the Kaiser as a prop of Christian civilisation. The fact that native liberals and republicans tended to favour France and the United Kingdom served only to

a central panel of Our Lady (later changed to St. Joseph): *Diario de las obras de Villa Tevere*, July 1954, AGP, serie M.2.2, 1059-5. There are oratories in Villa Tevere dedicated to St. Nicholas and St. Jean-Marie Vianney, nominated earlier, but *not* to St. Pius X or St. Thomas More, chosen only when works were advanced. An altar (reached through the ‘Aula’) is dedicated to the four Intercessors jointly.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, p. 306; AGP, serie A.5, 192-3-1, testimony of Jesús Álvarez Gazapo.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 414, footnote 70. Testimony of Hugo de Azevedo, 6 Sept. 1975, AGP, serie A.5, 206-3-8.

compound suspicions among widely assorted monarchist and traditionalist Catholics. King Alfonso XIII was himself torn between an ‘English’ wife and an ‘Austrian’ mother<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, in the attitude to Britain of some Spanish Catholics – and certainly in that of St. Josemaría in his youth – the historic persecution of Ireland’s Catholic population certainly played a part<sup>7</sup>. The Founder’s determination to overcome prejudices, both ancient and modern, was notable.

He certainly rejected the poison of nationalism, as opposed to healthy patriotism, and was determined that the universality of Opus Dei shine forth<sup>8</sup>. St. Josemaría was to explain to a young Peter Haverty who met him for the first time in London on 11 August 1958 what he would often point out in other conversations, namely that he might have taken up Spanish saints for intercessory purposes, but that he had determined otherwise. None of the Intercessors was to be Spanish<sup>9</sup>.

St. Thomas More was peculiarly apposite for a role as Intercessor of Opus Dei, both as a decidedly upright professional man and public servant, *and* as a married man and father. He was to be the only lay and non-celibate saint nominated: the field of the canonised with such characteristics was narrower than even today. Although St. Josemaría had envisaged married faithful in Opus Dei from the outset, he had been able to obtain approval formally to admit the first three Supernumerary members only in 1948<sup>10</sup>. It is likely that this development influenced in some measure the choice of St. Thomas More as Intercessor only a few years later.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. Michael CLIFTON, *Amigo – Friend of the Poor: Bishop of Southwark 1904-1949*, Leominster, Gracewing, 1987, pp. 57-65. Cfr. George SANTAYANA, *Persons and Places: Fragments of Autobiography*, W.G. HOLZBERGER – H.J. SAATKAMP Jr. (eds.), with Introduction by R.C. LYON, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1986, p. 527: himself anglophile, he found his sister’s family in Spain just after World War I imbued with an anglophobia in tune with ‘clerical and nationalist Spanish opinion’.

<sup>7</sup> AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, 1 p. TS. testimony of Andrés Vázquez de Prada, signed, Madrid, 20 Aug. 1975, commencing, ‘Durante las estancias’. St. Josemaría told Irish visitors to ‘avenge’ themselves by returning good for evil in converting the British.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., words cited in *Obras*, Aug 1964, pp. 11-12, AGP, Biblioteca, PO3.

<sup>9</sup> AGP, serie A.2, 24-2-1: 12 pp. TS., headed ‘Inglaterra: verano 1958’, unsigned, dated 1975, p. 7. Regional Commission of Opus Dei in Great Britain, London [hereafter, Regional Commission GB], MS. A6 note by the late Prof. John Henry on the Founder’s comments about the same, London, 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, pp. 158-163.

## ST. JOSEMARÍA'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR A PRE-1954 ACQUAINTANCE WITH ST. THOMAS MORE

If dating nomination to 1954 seems solidly grounded, it is by no means evident how and when the Founder first took an interest in the lawyer-statesman. While he *may* have spoken earlier of the English saint, there is no record extant of his having done so prior to the mid-1950s, and only a tentative reconstruction of possibilities is possible.

Much of the better-known Latin and Spanish bibliography concerning the martyr that might have been available to the Founder in his youth was of considerable antiquity and doubtful accuracy, but he must surely have been acquainted with some early-modern accounts provided by Juan Luis Vives, Pedro de Ribadeneira, Fernando de Herrera, Félix Lope de Vega, Francisco de Quevedo, and others<sup>11</sup>. The laudatory work by the Seville poet, Herrera, *Tomás Moro*, had been reprinted recently, just after More's beatification<sup>12</sup>. In 1941 St. Josemaría was to recommend his sons in Barcelona, in the face of severe contradictions, that they read Ribadeneira's life of St. Ignatius, which confirms his familiarity with another portion at least of that author's published work<sup>13</sup>. A peculiar, but nonetheless interesting, eye-witness *Crónica* by a Spaniard of the last years of Henry VIII and the early years Edward VI had circulated for centuries in manuscript before finding an editor and publisher in the late nineteenth century. This modern edition could have reached St. Josemaría<sup>14</sup>. Most of the few items of More interest published in Spain in the early twentieth century are not of scholarly quality and would scarcely have enhanced impressions drawn from the classics or pious hagiography.

<sup>11</sup> On the young St. Josemaría's love of literary classics, see *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 85-88; Jaime TOLDRÀ PARÉS, *Josemaría Escrivá en Logroño (1915-1925)*, Roma-Madrid, Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá – Rialp, 2007, pp. 103-104. On Spanish accounts of More, see FRANCISCO LÓPEZ ESTRADA, *Tomás Moro y España*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense, 1980.

<sup>12</sup> Fernando DE HERRERA, *Tomás Moro*, Madrid, Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1893.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. II, p. 475. Ribadeneira's works, including his *Historia eclesiástica del Cisma del Reino de Inglaterra* which treated of More, were accessible in several collected editions.

<sup>14</sup> [MARQUÉS DE] MOLINS (ed.), *Crónica del Rey Enrico Otavo de Ingalaterra [sic], escrita por un autor coetáneo, y ahora por primera vez impresa é ilustrada, con introducción, notas y apéndices*, Madrid, Librería de los Bibliófilos, Alfonso Durán, 1874 – author's identity disputed [online at: <http://clip.jccm.es/bidicam/en/consulta/registro.cmd?id=12031> (accessed 28 June 2012)]; translated into English and annotated by Martin A.S. HUME, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, London, G. Bell & Sons, 1889.

In 1905 there appeared a biography in Spanish that summarised, not very satisfactorily, an earlier Latin work, and this was still on sale in 1935<sup>15</sup>. St. Josemaría would have had access to relatively well-stocked libraries, if not during his early years in Barbastro and Logroño, at least during his higher ecclesiastical and civil studies in the provincial and ecclesiastical capital of Saragossa. The Library of the Seminario de San Carlos held, for example, several copies of Ribadeneira's *Historia eclesiástica del Cisma del Reino de Inglaterra* which treated of the English saint, and Herrera's *Tomás Moro* of 1592 in a 1617 edition<sup>16</sup>.

Probably the only work by More known directly to intelligent reading persons from the sixteenth onwards until the mid-twentieth century was his *Utopia*. Curiously, this had been taken up rather literally by early Spanish missionaries in the Americas seeking to create an ideal society, just as – in a very different way – it was read by Marxist contemporaries of St. Josemaría as a precocious foreshadowing of Communism<sup>17</sup>. The well-read Founder, however, was perfectly capable of distinguishing literary-humanistic *jeux d'esprit* from practical proposals for reformation, and in fact no record has been located of his having spoken of this book in any way. A copy was, however, on the shelves of his small 'Oratorio-Biblioteca' in Villa Tevere, Rome, which was in some measure operational, following building works, no later than September 1953. This library was one for his personal use, accessed via his bedroom, and may be regarded as broadly indicative of his interests

<sup>15</sup> Bernardino LEGARRAGA, *El Bienaventurado Tomás Moro, su vida, virtudes y muerte gloriosa*, Madrid, Apalategui, 1905. Cfr. Andrés VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *Sir Tomás Moro: Lord Canciller de Inglaterra*, Madrid, Rialp, 1999 [hereafter, VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *Sir Tomás Moro*; 6<sup>th</sup> edn. unless otherwise specified], p. 24, footnote 13. Legarraga's work was still on sale at two pesetas: see *El Siglo Futuro*, 25 June 1935, p. 17. (The Biblioteca Nacional did not become a legally requisite repository of publications until the 1940s.)

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Ramón HERRANDO PRAT DE LA RIBA, *Los años de seminario de Josemaría Escrivá en Zaragoza (1920-1925). El seminario de S. Francisco de Paula*, Roma-Madrid, Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá – Rialp, 2002, pp. 43-45, 91-92. Seminarists were not encouraged to read widely or to use the Biblioteca de San Carlos, but St. Josemaría did both (cfr. *ibid.*, p. 215). He also studied law at Saragossa's civil University. The author owes awareness of Seminario holdings to e-mail communication with Jorge Ipas (7 June and 27 July 2012).

<sup>17</sup> On the New World, see Silvio ZAVALA, *La 'Utopía' de Tomás Moro en la Nueva España y otros estudios*, México D.F., Antigua Librería Robredo de José Porrúa e Hijos, 1937. Karl KAUTSKY (1854-1938), *Thomas More und seine Utopie*, Stuttgart, Dietz, 1888, is the classic Marxist interpretation. At Lenin's behest More was included among forerunners of socialism on a Moscow monument in 1918.

and perceived needs, but, unfortunately, the exact provenance of particular items cannot be specified. Doubtless many were piecemeal transfers from his former room in Diego de León, Madrid. The presence here of *Utopia* suggests, however, that he had read it, or had at least intended to read it, at some stage<sup>18</sup>.

It is conceivable he was drawn to the heroic (but as yet uncanonised) jurist while engaged in the civil law studies he undertook in parallel with his priestly formation, but this is wholly undocumented. In fact, the local St. Raymond of Peñafort had usually been regarded by Spaniards as patron of lawyers, while Christian jurists in varied times and places had often had recourse to other saints<sup>19</sup>.

Doubtless publicity given the canonisation of Blessed Thomas More in 1935, occurring at a time of terrible politico-religious tension in Spain, will have had some impact. Pope Pius XI certainly intended, beyond marking the quatercentenary of the martyrdom, to make a point to a troubled Europe and to the world at large. St. Josemaría generally read the *ABC* (Madrid and Seville) newspaper which covered religious affairs extensively and sympathetically<sup>20</sup>, and there can be reasonable confidence that he will have seen its coverage of the canonisation. In that journal on 16 February 1935 there appeared a lengthy and illustrated two-page feature article expounding More's life and achievement. Despite a number of errors and misinterpretations, this offered a clear account of the good humour and uprightness, as well as the heroism in defence of the Catholic Church and the sanctity, of an exceptionally talented layman. The figure presented was polyfaceted: lawyer, diplomat, statesman, humanistic scholar, apologist, author, husband and father. At the very end there was reference to the martyr's severed head finding interment in the church of St. Dunstan, Canterbury, which the Founder was to visit many years later<sup>21</sup>. On 5 March the paper carried news of a decree of Pope Pius XI which looked to the canonisation and went on to report

<sup>18</sup> Information supplied by Jesús Gil Sáenz from work in progress cataloguing libraries in Villa Tevere. The writer owes to Jorge Ipas awareness of transfer of books from Madrid to Rome in and after 1946.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., St. Mark the Evangelist and the Breton St. Yves.

<sup>20</sup> On 16 Oct. 1931, he bought a copy and was attempting to read it when he became rapt in prayer: see VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. I, p. 389. José Javier López Jacoiste has testified, through Jorge Ipas with whom the author has corresponded by e-mail, that St. Josemaría still habitually read *ABC* c.1940.

<sup>21</sup> *ABC* (Madrid edn.), 16 Feb. 1935, pp. 6-7: Luis Antonio BOLÍN, 'El canciller Tomás Moro, santo de la Iglesia católica'. See below for the Founder's visits to Canterbury, 1958-1962.

words of the Pontiff which must surely have appealed: ‘The ways of the Lord are those of the saints’; and, ‘The Pope added that the two English martyrs invite everyone to practise holiness, each one in his own condition’<sup>22</sup>. Understandably, some celebratory writing in Spanish came at More’s life from an Iberian angle, notably with a focus on his support for Queen Catherine of Aragon and for the validity of her marriage to King Henry VIII<sup>23</sup>.

The Founder had been brought up in a Spain wherein French was the standard foreign language taught in secondary schools, and he had at one time put considerable effort into learning it<sup>24</sup>. His lack of English would have deterred him from tackling works published in the language, but that presented no insuperable obstacle to obtaining relatively accurate information.

A not inconsiderable Spanish-language biographical work was published at Buenos Aires in 1934 just prior to the quatercentenary of More’s death, following research on the ground in England, but there is no indication that it ever reached the Founder<sup>25</sup>. In 1904 an ex-Jesuit scholar-priest and eventual academician, Henri Brémond, had published a biographical study in French of the beatified More which was to be translated into Spanish and published in Chile four decades later<sup>26</sup>. Even if this had come into his hands in French or Spanish before the early 1950s, St. Josemaría might have treated its author – associated as he had been with modernist writers – in a cautious manner.

<sup>22</sup> *ABC* (Madrid edn.), 5 Mar. 1935, p. 3: ‘Los caminos del Señor son los de los santos’; ‘El Papa añadió que los dos mártires ingleses invitan a todo, al ejercicio de la santidad, cada uno en su propia condición’. The other canonised English martyr was the bishop and Cardinal, St. John Fisher.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr., e.g., a work by Félix DE LLANOS Y TORRIGLIA, *El divorcio de Catalina de Aragón, San Juan Fisher y Santo Tomás Moro: síntesis histórica*, Madrid, Fax, 1935. Canonisation led to publications in religious/theological periodicals that St. Josemaría may have seen: e.g., Ricardo GARCÍA VILLOSLADA, *Tomás Moro en las epístolas de Erasmo*, ‘Razón y Fe’ 109 (1935), pp. 303-324; 110 (1936), pp. 328-352.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, 1 p. TS. testimony, signed Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Madrid, 20 Aug. 1975, commencing, ‘Uno de los últimos años’: St. Josemaría told him c.1961-1962 that he was brushing up his French in which he had once been fluent – in part due to a lady instructor. Cfr. TOLDRÀ PARÉS, *Josemaría Escrivá*, p. 81, for school curricula.

<sup>25</sup> Lucrecia SÁENZ QUESADA DE SÁENZ, *Sir Thomas More: Humanista y Mártir*, Buenos Aires, Jacobo Peuser (for Corporación de Abogados Católicos), 1934.

<sup>26</sup> Henri BRÉMOND, *Le bienheureux Thomas More 1478-1535*, Paris, V. Lecoffre, 1904; English transl. H.H. CHILD, *Sir Thomas More (the Blessed Thomas More)*, London, Duckworth, 1904; Spanish transl. Mario GÓNGORA, *Tomás Moro*, Santiago de Chile, Difusión Chilena, 1944.



It does seem more than possible that he will have had a fleeting encounter with a most important literary relic of St. Thomas More which had been long treasured in Valencia, but which was little known elsewhere until the 1960s. St. Juan de Ribera (1532-1611; canonised 1960), Archbishop of Valencia, had in 1583 founded there to form priests the (Real) Colegio del Corpus Christi, formally inaugurated in 1604 and still in use for seminary purposes today. By circuitous means the holograph of St. Thomas More's late Latin work titled *De Tristitia Christi* had come into the hands of the Archbishop who lodged it – which he styled 'a hidden treasure' (*thesaurus absconditus*) – at his Colegio inside a wooden chest that contained also holograph sermons by the local St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P. (1350-1419), dedicatee of a side-chapel in the church there. The Dominican friar's father had had an Anglo-Scottish background, and he was himself celebrated for skilful arbitration in political disputes between rulers and noblemen. Only after the canonisation of More in 1935 was the chest placed for veneration in the Relic Chapel. Today it is kept in the Library. Interestingly, Andrés Vázquez de Prada was told by St. Josemaría that his 'countryman', St. Vincent Ferrer, might readily have been made Intercessor for relations with civil/secular authorities on the basis of traditional Hispanic devotion, and of his work of mediation, had the Founder not determined to look to non-Spanish saints<sup>27</sup>.

St. Josemaría visited Valencia as early as 1936, and made frequent sojourns in the city and its environs between 1939 and 1942 – especially to preach retreats to groups of lay faithful, priests, seminarians and religious –, as well as less frequent stays later in the 1940s. On several occasions he was present in the Colegio del Corpus Christi, and even said Mass there. He had, closely associated over decades with the Colegio, two intimate priest-friends upon whom he frequently called. He had first encountered Don Eladio España Navarro in 1936, and often sought him out after 1939. Don Eladio was resident in the Colegio for many years as a *colegial perpetuo* and served several periods as Rector. He was highly regarded as a confessor and spiritual director to students. The other, Don Antonio Rodilla, served as Rector of the associated *Seminario Mayor* from 1939 until 1969, as well as Vicar-General of the Archdiocese – in which capacity he provided in 1939 the Imprimatur

<sup>27</sup> AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, p. 24: Vázquez de Prada recalling St. Josemaría telling him in London that he had at first thought of St. Vincent Ferrer for Intercessor. Cfr. Andrés VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador del Opus Dei: Mons. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (1902-1975)*, Madrid, Rialp, 1983 [a first sketch of the life, prior to the author's 3-vol. work of 1997-2003], pp. 223, 508 endnote 49.

for *Camino* – from 1938 to 1944. He had been previously (1923-1939) Rector of the nearby Colegio Mayor San Juan de Ribera, situated in an ancient castle at Burjasot. That hall of residence had been founded in 1912 by a wealthy and pious lady to support with scholarships and accommodation lay university students of modest means and high potential. The castle had been acquired by San Juan de Ribera in 1600 and on his death it had passed to the Colegio del Corpus Christi, only to be lost by it in the anticlerical ‘desamortización’ of the nineteenth century. It was bought by the foundress of the hall of residence in 1894. In 1936 the Numerary member of Opus Dei, Rafael Calvo Serer, was already a resident scholar, and several other *colegiales* were to find their vocations after the Civil War. It is hard to conceive that Don Eladio and Don Antonio would have failed to grasp one of their many opportunities to show St. Josemaría the relic, and it is possible also that one of his sons might have drawn attention to it.

The manuscript came to the attention of scholars elsewhere only in the early 1960s after a correspondent in Valencia had communicated its existence to Andrés Vázquez de Prada on noticing the absence of any mention of it in the first edition of his Spanish biography of More. It was later utilised for the critical edition published in volume 14 of the Yale *Complete Works*<sup>28</sup>.

The great English work on More’s life by the Anglican scholar, Prof. R.W. Chambers, was published in Spanish translation at Buenos Aires just after World War II<sup>29</sup>. The translation is not mentioned in Vázquez de Prada’s

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. Juan Luis CORBÍN, *La Valencia que conoció San Josemaría Escrivá*, Valencia, Carena Editors, 2002, *passim*; Stanislaus M. HOGAN, *Saint Vincent Ferrer O.P.*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1911, pp. 1-2; Clarence H. MILLER, *The Holograph of More’s Expositio Passionis: A Brief History*, ‘Moreana’ 15-16, Nov. 1967, pp. 372-379; Richard S. SYLVESTER (General Editor), *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 15 vols. – some in multiple parts, New Haven & London, 1963-1997 [hereafter CW], vol. 14 – in 2 pts –, ed. Clarence H. Miller, 1976, esp. ii, pp. 695-724; VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. II, pp. 724-727. Vázquez de Prada’s account of how he became aware of the MS. – *Sir Tomás Moro*, Madrid, 1999, p. 346, footnote 26 – indicates that Prof. F. de A. Carreres de Catalunya in Valencia drew it to his attention only after he had first published in 1962. The footnote did not appear in earlier edns., e.g., Madrid, Rialp, 1966, which did, however, have an ‘Apéndice IV’ (pp. 373-375) on the MS., *not* reproduced in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>. (The Apéndice does not, of course, appear in the 1<sup>st</sup> edn. of 1962). In that Apéndice, p. 373, the author wrote of *more than one* reader of the 1<sup>st</sup> edn. alerting him (‘Varios de los lectores de la primera edición’), but Carreres is credited by footnote and Vázquez de Prada, in the present writer’s judgement, would hardly have failed to credit the Founder had he raised the point himself.

<sup>29</sup> R.W. CHAMBERS, *Thomas More*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1935; ID. (transl. Francisco GONZÁLEZ RÍOS), *Tomás Moro*, Buenos Aires, Juventud, 1946. On Chambers see *Oxford*

1962 Spanish biography of More, but there is evidence extant to suggest that St. Josemaría did read – or intended to read – the 1946 Spanish-language edition. The work in question is on the shelves of his small ‘Oratorio-Biblioteca’ in Villa Tevere, Rome. It contains, however, no marginal annotations or underlinings such as might confirm that he had actually read it and there can be no certainty about date of acquisition<sup>30</sup>. It could readily have been procured by or for him in Spain during the late 1940s, or might indeed have been sent him a few years later from Argentina where members of Opus Dei resided from 1950<sup>31</sup>. If the book could have reached him only *after* 1954, there still remains a possibility that *prior* perusal of it contributed to his choosing More as Intercessor in that year.

Conceivably St. Josemaría had early access to either the 1940 Italian-language or the 1945 Spanish-language translation of a biographical account of the martyr by the American Catholic, Daniel Sargent, who taught at Harvard University<sup>32</sup>. The author had encountered, visiting Harvard as early as 1946-1947, a member of Opus Dei who knew him as a biographer of More<sup>33</sup>. Sargent was later, after research in Spain, to publish in 1954 an admiring – if potentially disorienting – book about the engineer and early member of Opus Dei, Isidoro Zorzano, whose cause of canonisation had commenced in October 1948<sup>34</sup>. The American, in fact, made a thoughtful comparison between the attitudes of St. Thomas More and Isidoro Zorzano to seeking holiness in professional life<sup>35</sup>. Given that he was known to be undertaking this project and that members of Opus Dei provided background, it is likely

*Dictionary of National Biography* online, accessed 5 July 2012: Pope Pius XI thanked him for his work on More.

<sup>30</sup> Information supplied by Jesús Gil Sáenz from work in progress cataloguing libraries in Villa Tevere.

<sup>31</sup> Cfr. VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, p. 180.

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. Daniel SARGENT, *Thomas More*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1934; transl. Pedro ZULOAGA, *Tomás Moro*, Mexico D.F., Jus, 1945; *Tommaso Moro*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1940. In Italy at least one other, locally produced, biography of More appeared in the mid-1950s: Idilio DELL’ERA, *Tommaso Moro*, Torino, Borla, 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 216-3-11, testimony of José María González Barredo, Pamplona, 14 Sept. 1986, dating this meeting to 1947. It is set in 1946 by John R. Guegen, *The Early Days of Opus Dei in Boston as Recalled by the First Generation*, SetD 1 (2007), pp. 65-122, at p. 71.

<sup>34</sup> Cfr. Daniel SARGENT, *God’s Engineer*, Chicago, Scepter, 1954; VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, p. 116, footnote 50. Portions were read aloud to the Founder and others in early 1954, presumably in off-the-cuff translation: cfr. AGP, serie M.2.2, 1059-5, *Diario de las obras de Villa Tevere*, e.g., under 2 Feb. 1954.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-187.

that his biography of More, and possibly the Spanish or Italian translation, was at least brought to St. Josemaría's attention in the late 1940s or early 1950s. However, the only copy demonstrably to have reached the Founder's hands was of the second Spanish-language edition of 1968 – far too late to have influenced a decision made no later than mid-1954. This was given him, with the author's holograph dedication, by an American member of Opus Dei during his 1970 sojourn in Mexico<sup>36</sup>.

A Spanish translation or version of a 1935 French opuscle on More by the Swiss socialist and Esperanto enthusiast Edmond Privat appeared at Madrid in 1949, but there is no evidence to suggest that St. Josemaría was even aware of it<sup>37</sup>.

St. Josemaría was mostly resident in Rome from 1946 and may have become aware of Italian interest in the saint. A number of Italian laymen in the post-War political scene found in St. Thomas More inspiration for interventions in public life, and at times made public reference to his example. For obvious cultural reasons, moreover, Italian intellectuals remained fascinated by the European 'Renaissance' and its protagonists. Amongst those particularly interested in More there were figures like the much-published intellectual priest and bishop, Alberto Castelli (1907-1971), who had a considerable knowledge of English culture and literature. Castelli was, interestingly, a close relative of the engineer and building contractor Leonardo Castelli who took over the works at Villa Tevere in Rome from 1955 until their completion in 1960. The contractor became a close friend of Fr. Álvaro del Portillo<sup>38</sup>, and Bishop Alberto once administered First Communion and Confirmation to one of his children in the Oratory of the Holy Family at Villa Tevere. This link via his contractor relative was somewhat

<sup>36</sup> Daniel SARGENT (transl. Pedro ZULOAGA), *Tomás Moro*, México D.F., Jus, 1968. The handwritten dedication reads: 'To Monsignor Escriva / welcoming him to the New World / from an admirer of our / intercessor, Thomas More, / Daniel Sargent / June 21, 1970': dated the eve of More's feast. It is likely he received it next day. Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 344-3-9, testimony of Robert A. Paluszka, undated, about presentation of the volume at a gathering in Mexico City: he dates it to Tues. 23 June 1970 which he styles the feast – but that had fallen the previous day, Mon. 22 June. The Founder departed Mexico on 23 June. The volume is in the Library of the Auxiliary Vicar, Central House of Opus Dei, Rome.

<sup>37</sup> Edmond PRIVAT, *El Canciller decapitado: Santo Tomás Moro y Enrique VIII*, Madrid, Nueva Epoca, 1949, original: Edmond PRIVAT, *Le Chancelier Décapité: Saint Thomas More, Henri VIII et la république des Utopiens*, Neuchâtel & Paris, Victor Attinger, 1935.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. Javier MEDINA BAYO, *Álvaro del Portillo: Un hombre fiel*, Madrid, Rialp, 2012, pp. 328-329, 377, 391, 707.

posterior to 1954 and he cannot, on account of that alone, have influenced the Founder's decision to choose St. Thomas More as Intercessor in that year. Alberto Castelli had, however, translated into Italian and published in 1937 a biography of More that had been written just before his canonisation by the English convert, Christopher Hollis. He went on to edit an interesting early (1543) Italian poem of little literary value by Zenobio Ceffino about More's martyrdom, and to publish original works about the humanist saint in 1946-1947, as well as, later in life, translations of some of his writings<sup>39</sup>. While, then, it is not possible to be more specific, St. Josemaría may have been influenced directly by currents of thinking among Italian Catholic intellectuals, or indirectly, via conversation with some of his early sons in that country.

St. Josemaría surely took a greater interest in matters English following the start of stable work in London by faithful of Opus Dei at the end of 1946. In 1951 the Spanish Numerary member of Opus Dei and man of letters, Andrés Vázquez de Prada, arrived in London where he was to spend decades of his professional life. Since he was to become, with the Founder's encouragement, a biographer of More, it is tempting *a priori* to posit an early interest on his part, and some influence on St. Josemaría, prior to 1954. However, there is no evidence whatever to suggest that such was the case – in fact quite the reverse. For Vázquez de Prada declared that it was only over the winter 1958-1959 that, having seen in the previous summer the Founder commending to the Intercessor negotiations in respect of apostolic plans in

<sup>39</sup> Castelli, after twenty years teaching at the Catholic University of Milan, was appointed in 1953 Auxiliary Bishop for a suburbicane see of Rome; raised to titular archbishopric 1961; Secretary to Bishops' Conference of Italy, 1954-1966; Vice-President of Pontifical *Consilium de Laicis* 1966-1970. See for details of his life and work: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bcastelli.html>, as well as [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alberto\\_Castelli\\_\(arcivescovo\)](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alberto_Castelli_(arcivescovo)) (both accessed 30 Dec. 2013). See among his publications: Christopher HOLLIS (transl. Alberto CASTELLI), *Un cancelliere umanista sugli altari*, Como, Cavalieri, 1937; [originally, *Sir Thomas More*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1934]; Alberto CASTELLI, *Un poemetto inedito del secolo XVI in onore di San Tommaso Moro*, 'Aevum' 12, fasc. 2-3, (Apr.-Sept. 1938), pp. 225-252; ID., *Erasmus e Margherita Moro*, Milano, Casa Editrice Leonardo, 1943; ID., *Sugli scritti di San Tommaso Moro*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1946; ID., *San Tommaso Moro e l'umanesimo inglese*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1946; Tommaso MORO (transl. Alberto CASTELLI), *Venti lettere*, Roma, Studium, 1966; Tommaso MORO (transl. Alberto CASTELLI), *Dialogo del conforto nelle tribolazioni*, Roma, Studium, 1970; Tommaso MORO (transl. Alberto CASTELLI), *Lettere dal carcere*, Roma, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1971; (and, collected posthumously) Tommaso MORO, (transl. Alberto CASTELLI – Francesco ROGNONI), *Lettere*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2008.

Britain, he had himself taken an interest in St. Thomas More and planned articles for publication in Spanish<sup>40</sup>.

To place recourse to St. Thomas More in wider context, it must be acknowledged that even in England – where, especially after the mid-nineteenth century, most Catholics were of immigrant origin and lacking historic local roots and feelings –, his figure had been, at least until shortly before his 1935 canonisation, inspirational for only a minority of those who shared his faith<sup>41</sup>. Many English-speaking lawyers around the world have taken him for a Patron, but that has been mainly a post-1935 development.

The three significant sixteenth-century biographies of More by Englishmen – those of William Roper, Nicolas Harpsfield, and Thomas Stapleton – were not widely available in print or in the vernacular until modern times. The English-language manuscript account by More's son-in-law, Roper, was published only in 1626, and not reprinted for three centuries. Harpsfield's English-language account failed to reach print until the twentieth century. Stapleton's Latin life was published swiftly, but on the Continent, and remained fairly inaccessible until translated into English, again only in the twentieth century<sup>42</sup>. The English life by the martyr's great-grandson, Cresacre More, in part derivative from the earlier works, was poorly published in two editions on the Continent c.1630/1 and 1642, and again in England a century later, but a relatively scholarly edition did not appear until 1828<sup>43</sup>. Generally, for all its merits and greater diffusion relative to other accounts,

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, p. 22, testimony of Andrés Vázquez de Prada.

<sup>41</sup> See John DAVIES, *A Cult from Above: The Cause for Canonisation of John Fisher and Thomas More*, 'Recusant History' 28, 3, May 2007, pp. 458-474, *passim*. For plentiful literature on More's post-mortem reputation, see, e.g., James K. McCONICA, *The Recusant Reputation of Thomas More*, 'Canadian Catholic Historical Association [CCHA], Report' 30 (1963), pp. 47-61; Jacques GURY, *The Image of Thomas More in the Age of Enlightenment, XVII–XVIII*, 'Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles' 24 (1987), pp. 53-61; Hugh TREVOR-ROPER, *The Intellectual World of Sir Thomas More*, 'The American Oxonian' 48(i) (1978-1979), pp. 19-32.

<sup>42</sup> Cfr. Clarence H. MILLER, *On the Development of Thomas More Studies*, 'Thomas More Studies' 1 (2006), pp. 125-130, at p. 125. Stapleton was translated into French in the nineteenth century: *Histoire de Thomas More, Grand Chancelier d'Angleterre sous Henri VIII* (transl. Alexandre MARTIN – Jean M. Vincent AUDIN), Paris, Maisson, 1849. For a modern English version: *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More* (transl. Philip E. HALLETT – Ernest E. REYNOLDS), London, Burns & Oates, 1966.

<sup>43</sup> Cresacre MORE, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore* [sic], Douai, P. Bellière, ?1630/1; Douai, D. Bellière, 1642; *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, London, James Woodman & David Lyon, 1726; *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, Joseph HUNTER (ed.), London, William Pickering, 1828.

this work had but modest repercussion on a public beyond English Catholic gentry and clergy.

Thomas More was beatified in 1886 by Pope Leo XIII. A few years later a well-researched biography by a convert Redemptorist priest, Thomas Edward Bridgett, was published<sup>44</sup>. The author was fair-minded and scholarly, but express appreciation of his subject's saintliness probably limited his work's appeal mainly to Catholics even if it has later received due scholarly recognition<sup>45</sup>. Publication in 1935 of the subtle study by the Anglican R.W. Chambers marked a huge advance in appreciation of More by an intelligent general public. This was read by non-Catholics, and has been often reprinted and widely translated. The useful studies by Reynolds, Sargent and others helped later to make the Saint better known especially, but not only, in Catholic circles. Churches and schools began gradually to be dedicated to him after 1935, giving concrete form to his memory<sup>46</sup>.

It can be safely asserted that St. Josemaría had had ample opportunity prior to 1954 for some acquaintance with the life-story of St. Thomas More. Even a very basic outline of the martyr's life would have been quite sufficient to present him as an obvious and appropriate candidate for nomination as Intercessor<sup>47</sup>.

#### ENHANCED GENERAL APPRECIATION OF ST. THOMAS MORE POST-1954

At an unverifiable date, almost certainly posterior to 1954, and, given that it seems to have been mentioned to Andrés Vázquez de Prada in London five years later – and a photograph sent him only in early 1961 –, perhaps closer to 1959, an oil portrait was acquired by the Founder in Rome which purports to represent an elderly and bearded Thomas More, presumably from the era of his imprisonment in the Tower of London. The provenance of this portrait is at least debatable and certainly complex, but its acquisition

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Edward BRIDGETT, *Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England and Martyr under Henry VIII*, London, Burns & Oates, 1891.

<sup>45</sup> On Bridgett see: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online (accessed 5 July 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Cfr. DAVIES, *A Cult*, pp. 472, 474.

<sup>47</sup> St. Thomas More did not yet feature in the Universal Calendar of the Catholic Church in 1954, so the Founder could not have attained knowledge of, and devotion to him, simply via liturgy or Breviary.

– and its hanging in the very ante-room to the Founder’s (now the Prelate’s) Office in Villa Tevere – is indicative of strong interest by St. Josemaría in representation of the new Intercessor<sup>48</sup>.

It is quite possible that in 1959, the year following the first of St. Josemaría’s visits to Britain – treated below –, or early in 1960, he read, or skimmed, a study by the English Catholic, E.E. Reynolds, which had just then been translated into Spanish and published in Madrid – almost certainly inspired by his own nomination of its subject as Intercessor<sup>49</sup>. That, however, cannot account for a proven antecedent interest.

A massive boost to popular regard for More was given by the English playwright, Robert Bolt. He had written for performance on BBC Radio, coincidentally at the start of 1954, an early version of what was to become his mature play, *A Man for All Seasons*, but this had far less impact than the definitive stage version produced to moderate acclaim at the Globe (now Gielgud) Theatre in London from July 1960, and with far greater success on Broadway in New York from November 1961. A much-praised, if somewhat truncated, film production of the same, directed by Fred Zinnemann and starring Paul Scofield as More, was released in 1966. A later version, filmed for television, and closer in a number of respects to the original play, appeared in 1988 thanks to the American actor, Charlton Heston (1923-2008), who both directed and took the lead role, having earlier played More in American and British stage productions<sup>50</sup>. Bolt’s developed work, too late to have influenced nomination of More as an Intercessor, cannot not have had any impact upon the Founder during his five summers in Britain from 1958 to 1963 for he certainly did not visit the theatre.

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. Andrés VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *Sir Tomás Moro: Lord Canciller de Inglaterra*, Madrid, Rialp, 1962, Apéndice III, ‘Un Retrato de Sir Tomás Moro’, pp. 365-372, with a black and white photographic plate of the portrait facing p. 368; AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, p. 27, testimony of Andrés Vázquez de Prada.

<sup>49</sup> Ernest E. REYNOLDS (transl. J.M. PAVÓN RUIZ), *Santo Tomás Moro*, Madrid, Rialp, 1959; English original, *Saint Thomas More*, London, Burns & Oates, 1953. Vázquez de Prada wondered – AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, 1 p. TS. testimony, Madrid, 13 Sept. 1975 – if this had inspired the Founder’s querying of More’s ‘silence’, but he might equally have read Chambers which it is certain he possessed at some point, or other published items – even portions of a first draft of Vázquez de Prada’s book, although that author believed he had not at that time seen this.

<sup>50</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Man\\_for\\_All\\_Seasons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Man_for_All_Seasons) (accessed 20 Mar. 2009). On Bolt: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online (accessed 5 July 2012). On Heston: *American National Biography* online (accessed 5 July 2012).



Bolt, an agnostic socialist, portrayed More as a man of conscience with an anti-authoritarian streak, and as a defender of the rule of law against tyranny. It was a noble portrait, and one with a clear message for the time, but heroic interior sanctity, such as a Catholic might have perceived it, was not much in evidence (although some have found this a little more visible in Heston's than in Scofield's portrayal). When the Founder himself saw the Zinnemann film production years later in Rome he commented in passing to some of those about him that Scofield was rather too lacking in the joy for which the saint was renowned<sup>51</sup>.

At a scholarly level the great *Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More* was launched only in 1958, with fifteen volumes (some in multiple parts) appearing thereafter between 1963 and 1997<sup>52</sup>. Since 1963 an international journal of Thomas More studies, *Moreana*, has been regularly published in France by the 'Amici Thomae Mori', thanks above all to the enthusiasm of the Abbé Germain Marc'hadour. The London-based Andrés Vázquez de Prada became a consultant and contributor. Recent decades have seen a burgeoning mini-industry of studies and web resources<sup>53</sup>.

St. Josemaría's relatively precocious interest in St. Thomas More was certainly antecedent to, or anticipatory of, a post-1960 surge in public and scholarly fascination with the man and his works, for corporate recourse to St. Thomas More in Opus Dei antedated this by a few years.

#### ST. JOSEMARÍA'S DETERMINATION TO PROCURE A RELIC OF ST. THOMAS MORE

Probably in late 1957 – certainly no later than very early 1958 – a request, on behalf of the Founder, was relayed by a regular correspondent in Rome to the people of Opus Dei in London. They were asked to try to obtain a relic of St. Thomas More for what was then described as a projected 'relic chapel' in the Central House, Villa Tevere. The request made clear that unsuccessful efforts had already been made via other channels<sup>54</sup>. Searches

<sup>51</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>52</sup> See above, footnote 28, for bibliographic details.

<sup>53</sup> For a convenient example and conspectus, see website of Center for Thomas More Studies, Dallas, U.S.A.: <http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/> (accessed 7 July 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Regional Commission GB, A6 sheet, MS. double-sided, from Giorgio De Filippi to Juan Antonio Galarraga, undated (separated from dated letter?). De Filippi last corresponded

were made straightaway in London. As early as 14 February 1958 two people made a planned visit to the Archbishop of Westminster to speak about other matters and, using the opportunity, asked if he could help them to obtain one. He told them that it was quite impossible, even though they suggested he might give permission for them to detach a portion of a small relic in the possession of a priest<sup>55</sup>. So matters stood for some time, with all efforts coming to nothing.

This was hardly surprising, as the Archbishop's reaction suggested, at least in regard of first-class bodily relics. The headless corpse of the executed More had found a deliberately unmarked resting place amongst multiple interments beneath the church of St. Peter ad Vincula which lay within the liberties of the Tower of London and was not then open to wide public access. It is, moreover, by no means clear that the remains were undisturbed in later changes made at the church. The martyr's head had been rescued by his favourite daughter, Margaret Roper, through pious bribery and stratagem, when it was about to be removed (for unworthy if 'safe' disposal in the River Thames below) from a spike on London Bridge upon which it had been displayed in a manner customary for deterrence of other 'traitors'. It almost certainly found burial, years later, in the tomb-vault of the Ropers (the family of Margaret's husband) within St. Dunstan's church, Canterbury, which has long been an Anglican place of worship<sup>56</sup>. In the nature of things, therefore, relics of the saint's body were always going to be difficult, if not near impossible, to obtain. Efforts were made in London via dealers in antiquities to no effect. Fr. Galarraga evidently communicated the quest to his friend Mgr. Gordon Wheeler, Administrator of Westminster Cathedral, who kept his ears open. He informed Fr. Galarraga in a letter dated 18 June 1958 that Fr. Alfonso de Zulueta, Parish Priest of the church of The Most Holy Redeemer and St. Thomas More in Chelsea, had been seeking to have a repair made to the casing of an extraordinary relic that he believed had come to the church

on 18 Jan. 1958. The allocation of Intercessors' relics to the Oratory of the Holy Trinity may have come later.

<sup>55</sup> Regional Commission GB, A5 sheet, TS. carbon copy, undated, reporting in Spanish the outcome of the visit of 14 Feb. 1958, presumably for forwarding to the Founder.

<sup>56</sup> Cfr. Hugo O. ALBIN, *Opening of the Roper Vault in St. Dunstan's Canterbury and Thoughts on the Burial of William and Margaret Roper*, 'Moreana' 63 (Dec. 1979), pp. 29-35. For the vault and lead casket with the skull: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h0sQRqVWtk> (accessed 7 July 2012). St. Josemaría was unable to venture beyond the inscribed flagstone above.

before his own incumbency from a community of English nuns based in Bruges (Brugge), Belgium. It was seemingly a fragment of a vertebra at the base of More's skull that had been (deliberately or otherwise) detached at the time of its removal from the spike on London Bridge or, in any event, prior to interment at Canterbury. This relic was too small for further division. (It was to be stolen from the Chelsea church in early February 1981, and never recovered.) Mgr. Wheeler volunteered what he thought to be the address of the Bruges convent<sup>57</sup>. Fr. Thomas Holland, then Secretary to the Apostolic Delegation in London but later Bishop of Salford and a good friend of the Founder, also assisted in the search for a relic at some point in 1958-1959<sup>58</sup>.

During his summer 1958 stay in London the Founder expressed continued interest in obtaining a relic, and was told of the difficulties encountered. Giving his sons a gently humorous spur to further efforts, he joked that a reliquary chest had already been made, to accompany those filled with relics of the other three Intercessors, and that he would have to place in it a note to the effect that it was empty because his sons in England had failed to obtain a relic<sup>59</sup>.

The Bruges community of originally exiled English nuns – Augustinian Canonesses – remains to this day in its Belgian convent. In 1773 Fr. Thomas More, S.J., final Provincial of the English Jesuits prior to suppression of the Society and last in the direct male family line from his martyred namesake, gave the vertebra to his sister, Mother Mary Augustina More, 8<sup>th</sup> Prioress of the convent, who in turn left it to the community on her death in

<sup>57</sup> Regional Commission GB, TS. letter, Mgr. Gordon Wheeler to Fr. Juan Antonio Galarraga, 18 June 1958. Mgr. Wheeler's report from Zulueta that the relic had arrived before his incumbency dates acquisition prior to 1941. See *Catholic Herald* (London), 13 Feb. 1981, p. 3, 'Relic of Chelsea's own saint is stolen': suggesting the relic was acquired 'some 20 years ago'. Cfr. *ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1970, p. 3, 'St. Thomas More relics sought by Germans in Mexico': the Chelsea relic, 'too tiny to divide', said to have come from Bruges. Fr. Zulueta's account is reconcilable with the *Herald* if '20 years ago' refers to renewed display after re-casing. There is no extant parish documentation on its acquisition.

<sup>58</sup> Information supplied by Mgr. Richard Stork.

<sup>59</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 214-1-1, 17 pp. MS. testimony, signed Juan Antonio Galarraga, Cádiz, 30 Aug. 1975, '1958', pp. 8-9; AGP, serie A.2, 24-2-1, 12 pp. TS. testimony, headed 'Inglaterra: verano 1958', unsigned, dated 1975, p. 12; AGP, serie A.2, 238-2-6, testimony of Fr. Jaime Planell Fonrodona, Pamplona, 30 Aug. 1975; Ana SASTRE, *Tiempo de Caminar: Semblanza de Monseñor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Madrid, Rialp, 1989, p. 375. In Nov. or Dec. 1959 the Founder showed the *empty* reliquary to some members of Opus Dei: AGP, serie A.5, 244-2-1, testimony of Gumersindo Sánchez Fernández, Bilbao, 16 Sept. 1975.

1807. It would seem from records in the Archives of the British Province of the Society of Jesus that this relic had been given more than a century before in 1645 to Fr. Henry More, S.J., great-grandson of the martyr, by his cousin, Philip Roper, for safekeeping in some Jesuit house and that it had remained with the Province until the suppression. The part of it now remaining in Bruges is displayed in the Chapel under a portrait of the martyr, thought to be 'of the school of Holbein'. In 1877 the Prioress, Mother Mary Gabriel Belton, divided the vertebra and gave a portion to the British Jesuits – by community tradition in gratitude for assistance Fr. John Morris, S.J., had given them in making a new foundation in Haywards Heath, Sussex, and for his sterling work for the beatification of the English Martyrs. The separated portion was deposited at that time in the Jesuits' Manresa House, in Roehampton, London. There is considerable confusion about its later fate. According to a note found in a box of other relics formerly held at the now closed Manresa House, the relic was presented to the North American College, Rome, in 1972. Another note, rather contradicting that account, suggests it was broken up into six smaller relics before being brought back, after which at least two were sent to the United States and Australia<sup>60</sup>. If Fr. Galarraga or some other did make enquiries about seeking a first-class relic of this provenance in the late 1950s, these are undocumented, but, in any event, the investigation manifestly came to nothing.

Ultimately recourse had to be made to a celebrated secondary relic. Fr. Galarraga visited St. Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, in south Devon, on 27 August 1959 – while St. Josemaría was still in London on his second summer visit –, and viewed the large portion kept there by the nuns of St. Thomas More's hair-shirt (an under-garment made of coarse animal hair that mortified his flesh by constantly irritating his skin)<sup>61</sup>. There followed a correspondence between him and the Prioress about acquiring a piece for

<sup>60</sup> Cfr. *Lives of the English Martyrs Declared Blessed by Pope Leo XIII. in 1886 and 1895: Written by Fathers of the Oratory, of the Secular Clergy, and of the Society of Jesus*, vol. I, *Martyrs under Henry VIII*, Bede CAMM (ed.), reissued, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1914, p. 172; information kindly provided by e-mail of 3 July 2012 by Sister Mary Aline, Archivist of the Bruges Convent; information kindly provided by e-mail of 10 July 2012 by Ms. Anna Edwards, Assistant Archivist, Archives of the British Province of the Society of Jesus.

<sup>61</sup> Cfr. 'The Hairshirt of St. Thomas More, Newton Abbot, South Devon, St. Augustine's Priory': duplicated TS. leaflet, 4 pp., in Regional Commission GB; mentioned in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1912) entry on More: online at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14689c.htm> (accessed 5 July 2012).

St. Josemaría. By 12 September Mother Mary Dorothy was able to report approval of the Bishop of Plymouth for transfer of a piece from a small portion of the larger shirt which had been separated for her before the other had been definitively sealed. Fr. Galarraga was asked to send a reliquary within which the ‘few hairs’ might be encased, and it was then for the Bishop to provide a certificate of authentication. Eventually Fr. Galarraga was able to write to the Prioress on 21 December 1959 acknowledging receipt: ‘We are now in possession of the relic, and are about to send it to Rome. It will be a wonderful joy for our Founder and President-General, Mgr. Escrivá’<sup>62</sup>.

The relic was very soon enclosed, bearing the inscription ‘Ex cilicio Sancti Thomae Mori Martyri’, in the small pre-prepared reliquary chest which was to be found, with reliquaries of the other three Intercessors so far nominated, at the rear of the altar of the Oratory of the Holy Trinity in Villa Tevere where, as a rule, St. Josemaría said Mass and prayed daily until his death in 1975. This is in itself a strong pointer to the Founder’s felt need of regular recourse to the Intercessors. Until some time after nomination of St. Catherine of Siena in 1964 there were only four reliquaries on the altar, distributed in the outer four spaces between six candles. Eventually a reliquary for St. Catherine was added, and still later, after his canonisation in 2002, another for St. Josemaría himself – these latter two occupying space in the centre of the altar between the other four. That of St. Thomas More was (and is) the one on the far right. St. Josemaría showed it to the present writer on 30 September 1973 when he was privileged to attend the Founder’s Mass in that Oratory.

<sup>62</sup> Regional Commission GB, eleven TS. and MS. letters between Fr. Juan Antonio Galarraga and Mother Mary Dorothy, Prioress, Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, Priory of St. Augustine, Newton Abbot, Devon, 28 Aug. to 21 Dec. 1959. Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 214-1-1, 17 pp. MS. testimony, signed Juan Antonio Galarraga, Cádiz, 30 Aug. 1975, ‘1958’, pp. 8-9, for a later account; AGP, serie A.5, 238-2-6, testimony of Jaime Planell Fonrodona, Pamplona, 30 Aug. 1975; AGP, serie A.2, 24-2-2 ‘nuestro Padre en Inglaterra [verano 1959]’, 5 pp. TS. in Spanish, unsigned, pp. 3-4. The Priory closed in 1983, the relic passing to the Bishop of Plymouth who entrusted it to another female community, the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey, Marley Road, South Brent, Devon, which closed recently. The Bishop – information supplied, via e-mail 5 July 2012, by Sister Benignus O’Brien, Diocesan Archivist – has now entrusted the relic to the Benedictine monks of Buckfast Abbey, Devon.

## ST. THOMAS MORE AS INTERCESSOR OF OPUS DEI 1954-1964

Nomination of Thomas More as Intercessor was no mere gesture to internationalism, for, certainly by early 1957, and afterwards with exceptional frequency up to 1960, as well as again for many months in 1962 and yet again in late 1963, St. Thomas More was chosen as intercessory patron of 'General Monthly Intentions' proposed by the Founder to members of Opus Dei for assiduous prayer and apostolic endeavour. At the time of his nomination as an Intercessor there had been entrusted to him the appropriate field, broadly conceived, of Opus Dei's relations with 'civil' or secular authorities and entities. This was but fitting as the saint had engaged actively and by means of his pen in legal and public affairs, as well as political life, at many levels during a career which culminated in his taking office as Lord Chancellor of England. He had worked exceedingly hard, in collaboration with the hierarchy, to make the true teachings of the Catholic Church, then under Lutheran assault, better known.

More specifically, however, almost all the aforesaid Intentions focused on the need to pray and work for better understanding of the complete liberty of individual members of Opus Dei in matters of professional and public life, including politics<sup>63</sup>. They manifestly looked to contemporary confusions and calumnies, originating in Spain but increasingly of worldwide diffusion. In 1957 and after several members of Opus Dei had as private citizens freely accepted governmental posts offered them by the Franco régime. This gave rise to misunderstandings, jealousies and public polemics<sup>64</sup>.

The 1950s were difficult years for a rapidly growing Opus Dei in Spain where Church-State relations were – to put it but mildly – complex and fraught with peculiar tensions. Many in the régime had distinctly intolerant or one-party mentalities, which were reinforced – or further complicated – by an embarrassingly quasi-official Catholicism. Opus Dei was frequently attacked and defamed by influential figures and institutional groups, religious and political, who found it impossible to conceive – still less to tolerate – that individual Catholic laypeople might act on their own initiative, and

<sup>63</sup> Regional Commission GB, TS. General Monthly Intentions for Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June 1957; Nov. & Dec. 1958; May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct. 1962; Nov. & Dec. 1963.

<sup>64</sup> For historical context, see Jaume AURELL, *La formación de un gran relato sobre el Opus Dei*, SetD 6 (2012), pp. 235-294, *passim*.

wholly on their personal responsibility, in public life<sup>65</sup>. The repercussions of this in media controlled by mutually antipathetic groupings that supported the faction-ridden régime ran deep, and indeed flowed outwards to make an impact in other countries where more or less liberal commentators who understandably disliked both Francoism *and* its confessional Catholicism were only too ready to report them – and that in an incomprehending manner which further distorted originally Spanish misunderstandings. Spanish republican exiles in these countries were naturally disposed to make the most of such reports. The British media were by no means immune<sup>66</sup>.

These tensions, furthermore, increased the difficulty of obtaining full civil recognition and university status for the *Studium Generale* of Navarre in Pamplona, which the Founder had established in 1952, and for its academic qualifications or degree ‘titles’. The Spanish State had long jealously guarded a monopoly control over higher education. The *Studium* grew steadily but for the first decade of its existence students had to take their examinations at the University of Saragossa in order to obtain recognised degrees. The Concordat agreed between the Holy See and the Spanish State in 1953, regulating among other things the roles of Church and State in education, offered certain possibilities (via Article 31 in particular), but not without complications. In the end, following very complex negotiations, the *Studium Generale* was to obtain University status under a Church umbrella in 1960, but full civil recognition of its degrees only two years later as the first institution of higher education in Spain to break the State monopoly. The founder devoted much thought and prayer to the problem during that first decade of the institution’s existence, and certainly had recourse to St. Thomas More over dealings with civil authorities in this respect<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> The moderately positive 1959 *Times* profile of St. Josemaría – cited above – produced a brief embargo on sale of that number in Spain. See *The Times* (London), 24 Aug. 1959, p. 7, and 27 Aug. 1959, p. 7. The incident provoked a member of Opus Dei and critic of the régime, to publish in Paris a detailed analysis: Rafael CALVO SERER, *Notes sur un article du “Times”*, ‘La Table Ronde’, 142, Oct. 1959, pp. 144-153.

<sup>66</sup> Cfr., e.g., *The Times* (London), 30 Sept. 1957, p. 9, letter from Rev. Juan Antonio Galarraga to Editor, clarifying a related point.

<sup>67</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.2, 24-2-2 ‘nuestro Padre en Inglaterra [verano 1959]’, item 2, 5 pp. TS. in Spanish, unsigned, p. 3: the writer had heard from Fr. Galarraga that a 1959 visit by St. Josemaría to an old friend, Bishop Pedro Cantero Cuadrado – then staying at the Bishop of Salford’s residence, Wardley Hall – was related to the University-to-be and to an intention the Founder had entrusted to St. Thomas More; the same source indicated the Founder had just visited the Roper vault with that intention in mind. Cfr. Regional Commission GB, A6 MS. note by Gonzalo González, 19 Dec. 2008, recalling Fr. Galarraga’s expressed belief

## ST. JOSEMARÍA'S FIVE SUMMER SOJOURNS IN BRITAIN, 1958-1962

St. Josemaría passed the summers of five years 1958-1962 in England, and in consequence spent more time there than in any other country apart from his native Spain and Italy<sup>68</sup>. On Tuesday 26 August 1958 he visited Canterbury for the first time. It appears that he went to the Cathedral where was to be found what has been regarded traditionally as the Chair of the first Archbishop, St. Augustine, and saw in it the site of martyrdom of another of England's great saints, Thomas Becket<sup>69</sup>, but that he did *not* on this occasion call at St. Dunstan's church. If this seems in retrospect a surprising oversight, it can only be surmised that those with him on the occasion had not then registered the significance of that church. The omission must have been pointed out soon after his return to London. Very shortly afterwards

that the Founder had prayed for the *Studium Generale* on his first visit to the vault in 1958; Manuel GARRIDO GONZÁLEZ, *Correspondencia de San Josemaría Escrivá con aragoneses*, in Martín IBARRA BENLOCH (ed.), *Semblanzas Aragonesas de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Torreciudad (Huesca), Patronato de Torreciudad, 2004, pp. 161-198, at p. 165, for a letter of the Founder to Bishop Cantero, 9 Aug. 1959, about the new Institute of Canon Law. For correspondence with another ecclesiastic about the University-to-be and Institute, see Santiago MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Dos amigos que se escriben: Josemaría Escrivá y José María Bueno Monreal. 1939-1975*, SetD 6 (2012), pp. 297-394, at pp. 317-319, 342-346, 350-357, 359. A photograph exists of St. Josemaría praying at St. Dunstan's, probably in 1960 but just possibly in 1959 – the writer is grateful to Mgr. Richard Stork for advice on dating –, accompanied by, among others, Florentino Pérez Embid, who was much involved in negotiations and certainly came in 1960 to consult the Founder. The current Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echeverría – with St. Josemaría during his London sojourns 1958-1962 – in oral answers to questions put by the present writer in London, 12 Apr. 2008, confirmed that the Founder was then devoting much thought to the *Studium Generale* and that he prayed for this at the Roper vault. He added that the Holy See was keen that it be erected as a Catholic University to break a State stranglehold on higher education, but that the Founder had no desire for a confessional institution. He agreed only because the Holy See desired it. For the University's early years, see Francisco PONZ, *Principios fundacionales de la Universidad de Navarra*, in Onésimo DÍAZ – Federico M. REQUENA (eds.), *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y los inicios de la Universidad de Navarra (1952-1960)*, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2002, pp. 41-108, *passim*, esp. pp. 56-57; Federico SUÁREZ, *Los orígenes de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras: la Escuela de Historia*, in *ibid.*, pp. 185-202, *passim*. Cfr. ('From a Correspondent'), 'The University of Navarre: Its Aims and Achievements', *The Tablet* (London) 22 June 1963, p. 678, for a well-informed summary of the first eleven years, recent State recognition under stringent conditions, and key respects in which it differed from 'essentially ecclesiastical universities in a strict sense'.

<sup>68</sup> For a sketch, see VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, pp. 340-350.

<sup>69</sup> That Canterbury was the See of St. Augustine, sent to the English by Pope St. Gregory the Great, offered in itself abundant reason for visiting.



on 3 September, he travelled again to Canterbury, and this time with a single purpose. He went straightaway to St. Dunstan's church and stayed there praying for an hour or more by the flagstone above the Roper vault with Fr. Álvaro del Portillo, having sent the others who accompanied him to see the Cathedral<sup>70</sup>.

From the very outset of his stay in London that year the Founder had shown great interest in his sons starting stable work as soon as possible in the university city of Oxford which he visited on 8 August, only four days after his arrival. Things moved with great speed and there was already before he departed a distinct possibility of acquiring a property there, Grandpont House, with a considerable plot of land. The title deeds of the property were formally acquired in early 1959 but St. Josemaría had been pressing ahead with great speed already the previous August. He had, in fact, summoned from Rome an architect, Jesús Álvarez Gazapo, to view the potential site in Oxford and to consider a scheme of building. The project was almost certainly one of the matters, alongside what was to become the University of Navarre, about which the Founder prayed to St. Thomas More at Canterbury on 3 September 1958 – accompanied on the journey by Jesús Gazapo – since the matter was sure to involve negotiations with secular authorities<sup>71</sup>. St. Thomas More, although chiefly known as a Londoner, had studied in Oxford. He had served later in life, in a legal capacity, as the University's High Steward and had otherwise intervened in its affairs<sup>72</sup>. A couple of years later, in the midst of difficult negotiations with civil and academic authorities over plans for Grandpont House, an old oil painting of St. Thomas More which had hitherto hung in Netherhall House in London, was brought by Fr. Galarraga to Grandpont House – a further indication that members of Opus Dei were having recourse to the saint's intercession for an intention close to

<sup>70</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 214-1-1, 17 pp. MS. testimony, '1958', signed Juan Antonio Galarraga, Cádiz, 30 Aug. 1975, pp. 7-8: the writer expresses uncertainty as to whether the Founder had gone to Canterbury two or three times in 1958, and even about whether the occasion when he stayed alone with Fr. del Portillo was then or in 1959. However, another recalls being told by Fr. Galarraga at a much earlier date that the 26 Aug. visit did *not* take in St. Dunstan's: Regional Commission GB, A6 MS. note by Gonzalo González, 19 Dec. 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, pp. 21-22; AGP, serie A.2, 24-2-1: 12 pp. TS. testimony, headed 'Inglaterra: verano 1958', unsigned, dated 1975, pp. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12. There is a photograph taken at St. Dunstan's, 3 Sept. 1958, with the architect, Jesús Álvarez Gazapo, present.

<sup>72</sup> Cfr. CHAMBERS, *Thomas More*, pp. 64-66, 215.

the Founder's heart<sup>73</sup>. Just before the larger project for Oxford was effectively stopped by local opposition in the autumn of 1960, the Founder established a General Monthly Intention for September (renewed for succeeding months) in that year to obtain the prayer of all for the negotiations, with a view to its potential worldwide apostolic impact, and for this St. Thomas More was a specified patron<sup>74</sup>.

The Founder wished to visit on 15 August 1958, the feast of the Assumption, a church or shrine in London where Our Lady was especially venerated. He accepted a suggestion made that he might go to the Catholic parish church of Our Lady of Willesden wherein a destroyed pre-Reformation shrine of considerable importance had been modestly re-inaugurated in modern times. It had in fact been the focus of many diocesan pilgrimages in the recent worldwide Marian Year of 1954. On the morning of the feast St. Josemaría went there with several of his sons and renewed the Consecration of Opus Dei to the Most Sweet Heart of Mary which he had first done exactly seven years before at Loreto in Italy, praying in addition for the development of the apostolic work especially in Britain<sup>75</sup>. Whether or not he was informed of the fact at the time, or on any of the other occasions when he visited the church between then and his last stay in London during 1962, St. Thomas More had in an earlier era visited the pre-Reformation shrine at Willesden on pilgrimage<sup>76</sup>. Nearly half a century after the visit of 15 August 1958, there

<sup>73</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie M.2.2, 283-14, Diary, Grandpont-2, Oxford (Inglaterra), 12 Feb. 1960 – 5 Mar. 1961, under Tues. 1 Mar. 1960. The same Diary, under 26 June 1960, indicates Vázquez de Prada was then resident and working on his biography. Nothing suggests the picture was moved on the Founder's indication. Cfr. also AGP, serie M.1.1, c1586-A1, letter from Joaquín Alonso to Juan Antonio Galarraga, Rome, 20 Oct. 1960, urging the people of Opus Dei in Britain, as from the Founder, to pray to both St. Thomas More and (the as yet unbeatified) Cardinal John Henry Newman for the Oxford project.

<sup>74</sup> Cfr. Regional Commission GB, TS. General Monthly Intention, Sept., Oct. & Nov. 1960: '*Pidamos a Dios Nuestro Señor que bendiga el desarrollo de la labor que hacemos en Oxford [...] y haga posible que muchas personas de los diferentes países de Asia, Africa, Escandinavia, etc., vengan a formarse a nuestra residencia; de modo que contribuyan después a que esos países vivan y se desarrollen según los principios y el espíritu de Cristo, y sean también una ayuda eficaz en la labor apostólica de la Iglesia*'.

<sup>75</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.2, 24-2-1, 12 pp. TS. testimony, headed 'Inglaterra: verano 1958', unsigned, dated 1975, p. 5; AGP, serie A.5, 214-1-1, 17 pp. MS. testimony, signed Juan Antonio Galarraga, Cádiz, 30 Aug. 1975, '1958', pp. 14-15; VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, p. 343.

<sup>76</sup> Cfr. Peter ACKROYD, *The Life of Thomas More*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1998, p. 350. More's step-daughter married Sir Giles Alington of Willesden, so he probably visited often. Cfr. also VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *Sir Tomás Moro*, p. 229.

took place on 13 June 2006 the public blessing of a board fixed by the parish clergy to the front of the church with painted representations of the two canonised saints known to have undertaken pilgrimages to Willesden – St. Thomas More and St. Josemaría Escrivá – praying before Our Lady<sup>77</sup>.

On Thursday 16 July 1959 the Founder arrived in Britain through Dover on his second visit to the country, and paid a visit that very day to St. Dunstan's in Canterbury on his way up to London by car. At least one other visit, on 10 August, was made from London that summer. It was during this sojourn, and after two visits to Canterbury, that there appeared the article in *The Times* with reference to which this article opened.

As far as he could recall when he wrote about the matter after the Founder's death, it was in summer 1959 – presumably on 10 August, during the return journey by car to London from what the Founder insisted was a *pilgrimage* to pray by the vault at St. Dunstan's church – that Andrés Vázquez de Prada had a long conversation with St. Josemaría in which he recounted aspects of the life, death and burial of the martyr. He had been researching these since the previous year after noting the Founder's recourse to the saint's intercession in respect of plans for apostolic expansion in Britain. He mentioned in passing that he was preparing some short articles on St. Thomas More for a Spanish journal. Fr. Álvaro del Portillo, with them in the car, interjected with a suggestion: 'Could you not write a book?'. This thought was immediately taken up and developed at length by St. Josemaría who encouraged Vázquez de Prada to embark upon the enterprise and went on to discuss the need to enter into the psychology of his subject, to study in depth the development of his ideas, and to contextualise. The conversation turned to the work expected of a good historian, and the Founder insisted on the need to be objective in collecting data truthfully<sup>78</sup>.

Due to the paternal insistence of a very concerned St. Josemaría, Vázquez de Prada spent a prolonged period in Spain recuperating from illness between autumn 1959 and spring 1960. He was far from idle and used

<sup>77</sup> For a photograph of the board: <http://www.opusdei.org.uk/art.php?p=17415> (accessed 5 July 2012). Fr. Nicholas Schofield, then an Assistant Priest in the Parish – now Archivist of the Archdiocese of Westminster –, and, of course, the Parish priest, Fr. Stephen Willis, were active in the project.

<sup>78</sup> AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, 3 pp. TS., signed Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Madrid, 4 Sept. 1975, commencing, 'En el verano de 1959'; also, summary reference in 'Prólogo a la primera edición', VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *Sir Tomás Moro*, p. 12: 'una voz paternal y amiga me animó a rematar el trabajo'.

his enforced absence from professional work in London to produce a first draft of the biography he had been encouraged to write. In May 1960 he went to Rome at the Founder's invitation and left there his draft text to obtain opinions from qualified critics. He was back in London by the time of St. Josemaría's sojourn there that summer and told him that he had received some comments one of which had determined him upon wholesale recasting of the manuscript for greater effectiveness. The Founder, in one of several conversations they had about St. Thomas More, urged him again to seek 'the truth, objectivity; without fear of what might be ascertained'<sup>79</sup>. In London during the summer of 1962 the author, at St. Josemaría's explicit request, obtained for him a set of corrected proofs of his – now completely rewritten and about-to-be-published – Spanish biography. Shortly afterwards, when the Founder had read it through, evidently – from comments he made later on – with scrupulous attention, he told the author, 'This book is written with the heart'; and he added, 'It must have done you much good interiorly'. He had been, as he told others on a number of occasions, very pleased at Vázquez de Prada's readiness to take on board criticisms and suggestions received from others for improvement of his work<sup>80</sup>. There were other witnesses to the pleasure St. Josemaría took in the text that summer, as well as in later years<sup>81</sup>, when he was heard to comment that further editions of the book – of which there have in fact been a number – might do a lot of good to souls<sup>82</sup>.

The Founder continued to make visits to Canterbury in each of his summer stays in England up to 1962<sup>83</sup>, but he went also to other sites associated with More, including the Tower of London where the saint had been

<sup>79</sup> AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, pp. 4, 21-27. The Spanish words reported by Vazquez de Prada are: 'la verdad, la objetividad; sin miedo a lo que pudiese averiguar'.

<sup>80</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 27, 1 p. TS. testimony, signed Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Madrid, 13 Aug. 1975: 'Este libro está escrito con el corazón', and, 'Te ha tenido que hacer mucho bien por dentro'.

<sup>81</sup> Cfr. Regional Commission GB, A6 MS. note by Gonzalo González, 19 Dec. 2008, recalling St. Josemaría telling Vázquez de Prada in London that he had read his book and declaring, 'me lo pasé en grande'; AGP, serie A5, 247-2-4, testimony of Richard Stork, 31 Aug. 1975; AGP, serie A.5, 197-1-5, testimony of Rafael María de Balbín Behrmann, with ref. to a gathering in Pamplona, 12 Sept. 1962.

<sup>82</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 198-3-1, testimony of Pablo Bofill, Elorrio, 18 Aug. 1975, with reference to words heard in Rome, 20 Jan. 1973.

<sup>83</sup> In 1961 he certainly went to Canterbury at least on 10 Aug. and in 1962 on 27 Aug.: information supplied by Mgr. Richard Stork from summaries made at these times by women of Opus Dei in London.

imprisoned. Vázquez de Prada recalled a visit he made with St. Josemaría in the summer of either 1961 or 1962 to Lincoln's Inn, one of the four great societies of English barristers, of which More had been a loyal and lifelong member from the days of his early legal studies. He remembered their examining the Old Hall and other buildings of More's era in their original or restored form, and the Founder paying close attention to them<sup>84</sup>.

St. Josemaría's evident devotion to, and confidence in the intercession of, St. Thomas More has been inspirational for members of Opus Dei other than Vázquez de Prada. The Founder's interest in pilgrimage to, and devout prayer at, the Roper Vault in Canterbury brought many of his sons, either resident in England or passing through, to journey there from the late-1950s onwards<sup>85</sup>. Several have gone on to publish biographies of the saint in their own languages<sup>86</sup>.

#### ST. THOMAS MORE AND ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

Vázquez de Prada left an account of a certain unease about St. Thomas More that came upon the Founder apparently around 1960. In London during the summer of that year St. Josemaría told Vázquez de Prada, who had by then, thanks to prolonged convalescence from illness, produced a first draft of his Spanish-language biography of St. Thomas More, that 'he did not see clearly his attitude in the face of the English authorities'. This implied a more than casual acquaintance with the saint's life-story by that time, but it also suggested that the 'difficulty' had arisen only *after* his nomination as Intercessor in 1954. He went on to compare unfavourably More's attitude with the *outspokenness* of St. Catherine of Siena. Vázquez de Prada understood that he felt the supposed 'silence' of More amounted almost to a failure to speak his mind openly. One of the others present on that occasion, who like-

<sup>84</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, p. 24, 1 p. TS. testimony, signed Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Madrid, 14 Aug. 1975. He may not actually have entered the Tower – an entry fee applies, and his spirit of poverty led him generally to avoid such expenses – but he certainly viewed it externally.

<sup>85</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 1465-1-10, signed testimony of Cipriano Rodríguez Santa María, Manizales, Aug. 1975: students of the Roman College of the Holy Cross, in London during summer 1959, spoke of their visits to the Roper vault.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., Peter BERGLAR, *Die Stunde des Thomas Morus: Einer gegen die Macht*, Freiburg, Walter, 1978; Gerard WEGEMER, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton, Scepter, 1995.

wise understood the point at issue to be a supposed unwillingness in More to declare himself, thought the biographer-to-be's oral explanation to the Founder rather unsatisfactory. Afterwards, Vázquez de Prada determined to insert into his book a long footnote containing a clarification made about this very point in the sixteenth century by Cardinal Reginald Pole in a letter to a Spanish bishop. He later came to believe St. Josemaría had been satisfied after reading the said explanation<sup>87</sup>.

Historians in more recent decades have very much clarified the vexed question of More's 'silence' and have shown how in reality he was very active in the business of the 'Reformation Parliament' that sat from 1529, both *indirectly* – an approach he always favoured, especially while in the King's employ – and even *directly* by means of publications, until his resignation of the chancellorship of England in 1532<sup>88</sup>. This was certainly not hidden from his opponents, even if it was circumspect. The genuine silence he employed in his own defence at the end of his life when he no longer held public office was in fact so relative that its resounding eloquence was to cost him his life.

It may also have been that St. Josemaría, with his elevated conception of the lay calling, was troubled by the manner in which biographical accounts hitherto available to him had treated the young More's supposed 'trying of his vocation' with the Carthusians. Some had suggested, with Erasmus, that

<sup>87</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, 1 p. TS. testimony, signed Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Madrid, 13 Sept. 1975; VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *Sir Tomás Moro*, p. 361, footnote 6; Regional Commission GB, A6 MS. note, dated 19 Dec. 2008, by Gonzalo González. Pole defended More's use of law to keep silent during trial as appropriate for a lay lawyer, and pointed to his outspoken recourse to divine law in publicly declaring his mind *after* condemnation: see Thomas F. MAYER (ed.), *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole* (4 vols. to date) Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002-2008, ii, pp. 120-121, Pole to Francisco de Navarra, Bishop of Badajoz [probably early 1553]. A pamphlet (held in Regional Commission GB) used by the Founder in visiting London at some stage 1958-1962, explicitly claimed More was condemned 'for silence': *The Tower of London: Notes for Catholics*, London, Catholic Truth Society, 1955, p. 4. It can, in fact, be argued that his efforts to influence the King were pursued even beyond his resignation of office.

<sup>88</sup> Notably, John A. GUY, *The Public Career of Thomas More*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980, *passim*, esp. pp. 97-203. On 'silence' in English Law and Civil Law see J. Duncan M. DERRETT, *More's Silence and his Trial*, 'Moreana' 22 (87-88, Nov. 1985), pp. 25-27. Cfr. Oliver MOORE, *Sir Thomas More's Final Years: Silence, Silencing, and Constitutional Change*, 'Law and Humanities' 2 (1), (2008), pp. 75-98; Hernán CORRAL TALCIANI, Qui tacet consentire videtur. *La importancia de una antigua regla canónica en el juicio contra Tomás Moro*, 'Ius Canonicum' 51, no. 101 (2011), pp. 137-160; Henry Ansgar KELLY – Louis W. KARLIN – Gerard B. WEGEMER (eds.), *Thomas More's Trial by Jury*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2011, *passim*.

he had settled for ‘second best’ as a good husband rather than as a bad priest. The Founder was to comment, after reading in 1962 proofs of Vázquez de Prada’s book, on how he was particularly pleased with the account given therein of More’s discovery of his vocation<sup>89</sup>.

When the Italian, St. Catherine of Siena, came to be nominated as the fifth (and last) Intercessor of Opus Dei in 1964 the Founder made plain that his devotion to her was by no means of recent growth. What was, however, novel at that time was the unbridled ferocity of assaults upon the Church’s integrity in the maelstrom of media commentary accompanying Vatican Council II, *and* an ever-increasing ‘globalisation’ of originally Spanish calumnies against Opus Dei. St. Josemaría had long been content to maintain a discreet silence – express advice from prudent ecclesiastics of the Roman Curia confirming his own characteristic desire to ‘pass unnoticed’ –, and indeed determined to let pass personal attacks upon himself, but, suffering acutely on account of disloyalty and untruthfulness in the early 1960s, he came gradually to realise that the time had come to speak out<sup>90</sup>. This process came to a head in Spring 1964 when he declared: ‘Hitherto it was heroic to keep silent, and that is what your brothers have done. But now the heroic thing is to speak, to try to prevent God Our Lord from being offended. We should speak; trying not to wound, with charity, but also with clarity. Long live St. Catherine!’ The Italian saint’s feast, then on 30 April, was celebrated in a particular manner for the first time that year in Villa Tevere<sup>91</sup>. On 13 May he announced that, as of then, St. Catherine of Siena was to be Opus Dei’s Intercessor in matters relating to the apostolate of giving a correct and truthful orientation to public opinion<sup>92</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 252-1, 2 pp. TS. testimony, signed Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Madrid, 3 Sept. 1975.

<sup>90</sup> Cfr. VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, pp. 518-536, *passim*; AURELL, *La formación*, esp. pp. 271-274, 285-86; ILLANES, *Conversaciones*, ed. crít., pp. 19-25.

<sup>91</sup> *Crónica*, May 1964, p. 62, AGP, Biblioteca, PO1; *Crónica*, March 1989, pp. 304-305, AGP, Biblioteca, PO1; both citing words of the Founder. St. Thomas More had been nominated by the Founder a patron for General Monthly Intentions even in late 1963: Regional Commission GB, TS. General Monthly Intentions, Nov. & Dec. 1963, the former relating to effective communication of the Church’s *Magisterium* and the latter to making clear the political freedom of members of Opus Dei.

<sup>92</sup> *Crónica*, May 1964, p. 61, AGP, Biblioteca, PO1: ‘Antes lo heroico era callar, y así lo hicieron vuestros hermanos. Pero ahora lo heroico es hablar, para tratar de evitar que se ofenda a Dios Nuestro Señor. Hablar; procurando no herir, con caridad, pero también con claridad. ¡Viva Santa Catalina!’; *Crónica*, March 1989, p. 305, AGP, Biblioteca, PO1, citing words of the Founder.

As has been seen, a number of General Monthly Intentions proposed by the Founder to his children from the late 1950s onwards had been related to prayer for a correct forming of public opinion, but these had hitherto been entrusted to St. Thomas More. The nomination of St. Catherine in effect hived off a portion of the portfolio (so to speak) of St. Thomas More. Henceforth he remained a valued Intercessor in the wide field of Opus Dei's relations with civil/secular authorities, while the more specific field of the apostolate of public opinion, clearly conceived earlier as part of the same, was now entrusted to St. Catherine. It is by no means necessary to attribute this change to any lingering doubt in the Founder's mind about the English saint's profound fortitude. Rather, it was simply that, with the new emphasis to be given to actually speaking out and to taking strongly 'pro-active' approaches to the mass media upon which he had determined in the face of specific difficulties, he now turned to a manifestly appropriate Intercessor<sup>93</sup>.

#### ST. THOMAS MORE IN ST. JOSEMARÍA'S LAST YEARS

There can be little doubt that, whatever St. Josemaría had read about St. Thomas More hitherto, the Spanish biography published in 1962 by Vázquez de Prada – a spiritual son who shared his outlook – broadened appreciably his regard for the English saint. Thereafter, and following his five summers in London, there are recorded a number of focused references by the Founder to St. Thomas More which make plain that he no longer had significant reservations about his public activity.

In 1966, for example, amidst the confusion characteristic of the decade, Ramón García de Haro recalled him saying that the English saint had had all the virtues, including intransigence with error and 'transigence' with persons. He added a remark, often repeated in these years, that Thomas More might readily have belonged to Opus Dei as a married Supernumerary member had he lived in the contemporary era<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> More venerated St. Catherine and was probably acquainted with some of her revelations in translation if not in the original. See CW vol. 7, Frank MANLEY – Germain MARC'HADOUR – Richard MARIUS – Clarence H. MILLER (eds.), p. 209, lines 19-25; p. 375, note 209/25.

<sup>94</sup> AGP, serie A.5, 327-1-1, TS, testimony of Ramón García de Haro, with ref. to a gathering on 25 Mar. 1966. On the latter point, cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 224-1-6, testimony of Fernando Varela de Limia, Madrid, 22 Aug. 1975, with ref. to words spoken by the Founder in Rome around the feast of St. Thomas More, 1967; Regional Commission GB, A6 MS., note



At times he spoke of More as an example to modern people of true faithfulness in regard of rights and duties alike, both as citizens and as Christians, pointing out that even before he had ‘seen’ Opus Dei on 2 October 1928 he had himself had a clear view of the importance of each of these fields. The English lay saint clearly appealed to him in this respect<sup>95</sup>.

In 1973 he told a group of his sons in Rome – in asserting that republication of the biography by Andrés Vázquez de Prada in further editions might do much good – that More had had the heart of a father and of a husband, and that while he had loved the King he yet knew how to say ‘No’<sup>96</sup>.

It seems that St. Josemaría sat right through the Zinnemann-directed film, *A Man For All Seasons*, in a dubbed version, fairly soon after it appeared in 1966. Some years afterwards, however, towards the end of his life, he acceded to a proposal by some of his sons in Spain – who thought it might help him rest – that he attend another showing, but on this occasion he rose suddenly and left the room shortly after the film had started. A few hours later he explained to those about him that his departure had been caused by acute suffering. He had been struck forcibly by parallels with the state of affairs in the contemporary Church wherein, he suggested, much was actually in a worse state than it had been in More’s England. He used the occasion to speak of the saint’s life in such detail that some of those present were more than a little surprised<sup>97</sup>.

In the like context of troubles in the Church in the 1960s and disloyalty manifested even, or especially, by clerics, the Founder was heard at times to

by Gonzalo González, 19 Dec. 2008, recalling words of St. Josemaría during a summer sojourn in London.

<sup>95</sup> *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer Sacerdote Fundador del Opus Dei: Artículos del Postulador*, Roma, 1979, section 784, p. 262, with ref. to words uttered in Rome on 22 June 1972, drawing on testimonies of Eugenio Giménez Martínez de Carvajal and of Dr. Umberto Farri: ‘Esta mañana lo veía con claridad en la Misa de S. Tomás Moro: hasta el final de su vida fue ejemplarmente fiel al Rey, pero sin ceder ni un milímetro en lo que no podía ceder. Desde antes de que Dios quisiera la Obra en el tiempo, he visto con claridad los dos campos: deberes y derechos de ciudadano; deberes y derechos de cristiano: y he sido consecuente’.

<sup>96</sup> AGP, serie A.5, 198-3-1, testimony, signed Pablo Bofill, Elorrio, 18 Aug. 1975, with ref. to a gathering in Rome, 20 Jan. 1973.

<sup>97</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 202-2-9, testimony, signed by Alejandro Cantero Fariña, Madrid, 19 Feb. 1979, with ref. to a gathering in Castellldaura, Barcelona, Sept. 1974; AGP, serie A.5, 198-3-1, testimony, signed Pablo Bofill, Elorrio, 19 Aug. 1975, with ref. to a gathering in Castellldaura, Barcelona, 23 Sept. 1973: perhaps an account of the same meeting, although actually dated a year earlier.

remark on how the layman St. Thomas More had set an example of fortitude and loyalty to the priests and bishops of England who were his contemporaries<sup>98</sup>.

He naturally took delight in showing the relic of St. Thomas More in the Oratory of the Holy Trinity to English people of Opus Dei who were studying in Rome or simply visiting, but often used such occasions to spur reflection. He would remark wryly and mischievously on how difficult it had proved to obtain any relic at all in that vaunted land of liberty, and would use this as a platform from which to expound the true nature of Christian liberty of spirit<sup>99</sup>. This was linked at least in part, after he had come to a deeper understanding of the English character during the five summers he spent there from 1958 to 1962, to a concern lest a local obsession with respecting 'privacy' might inhibit his sons from getting involved in the lives of others as true friends and apostles. He saw this as rooted in a false conception of freedom<sup>100</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 326-3-3, testimony of Antonio Miralles García, Rome, 30 Aug. 1975, with ref. to a gathering of members of Opus Dei with the Founder at Tor d'Aveia, Italy, 5 July 1967.

<sup>99</sup> Personal recollection of the writer, based on notes taken at the time, of a conversation of 30 Sept. 1973 when the Founder showed him the reliquary. Cfr. AGP, serie A.5, 249-1-4, testimony of Robin Weatherill, Rome, 26 Aug. 1975, about St. Josemaría showing him the relic on 27 Jan. 1974.

<sup>100</sup> Regional Commission GB, ref. in an A6 note, MS., double-sided, by the late Prof. John Henry, to words of the Founder, seemingly of 22 Aug. 1962, about a false British conception of freedom, with people afraid to get involved in the lives of others for fear of violating 'privacy'.