

question of size is sidestepped. Yet it is central to the solution of some of the problems. Size has to do with the overcoming of the 'cultural shackles' and the difficulty of expressing the prophetic role of the community if it is involved in the care of estates and property. Size also affects the quality of hospitality. One feels that the authors are still in the realm of paternalism where the poor and needy are concerned. Guestmasters still relieve the rest from really receiving the guest as Christ himself. It's all a far cry from Subiaco and the desert fathers.

Solitude needs a bit more treatment than half a dozen references. It should have had a chapter to itself. The authors realize that the present day rebirth among us of the eremitic vocation emerging from community either temporarily or permanently is very much part of the new monastic scene (p. 105). In any case solitude is at the heart of a monk's vocation.

We are still frightened off the *fuga mundi* theme — understandably — and this book handles it with gloves on. It may be, however, that this is the theme which will emerge in the next century. Certainly tradition is embarrassingly full of it. Is it really due only to a wrong theology of Church and world or is it an extreme sign of the coming kingdom? After all, the Lord himself told us to flee when these begin to come to pass.

The reviewer as a religious of a small ecumenical community cannot but regret the absence of a chapter on the increasingly important rôle of monasticism in the growth of unity between the Churches and indeed in the dialogue with other religions. There have been so many experiments and studies of this aspect of monastic life that it is a pity to ignore them.

The book raises in the mind of the reader speculations outside the scope of the commission's main interests. What does or should monasticism look like in South America, in South Africa or even in Vietnam? Is there a something in monastic life itself that offers hope to the unwilling poor and unwilling obedient and even the unwilling chaste among the inhabitants of the Third World? Whatever the answers would be, the attempt of English Benedictines to exorcise from themselves the spirit of bland middle-class attitudes is more than a case study. We are grateful to them for setting the scene for more fundamental deductions (hinted at in the last paragraph of p. 341) from the theology so admirably set forth in this book. The publishers also are to be thanked for the careful production of a beautiful book.

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Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: A Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei. Salvador Bernal. Veritas, Dublin, 1978. N.p.g. Pp. 343.

This is the story of a twentieth century secular priest who, after a saintly life, died in Rome on 26 June 1975. His teaching restored to its original importance, after centuries of general neglect, the doctrine of Jesus Christ on the universal call to holiness for layfolk and secular priests, which was later solemnly proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council. The aim of the Association he founded is the following: so to motivate lay people and secular priests of the Church, as to find the highest union with God, by the careful fulfilment of the ordinary duties of the Christian in the ordinary life

and work in which they are engaged. Therefore, for them, there can be no question of withdrawal from the world but rather the cheerful commitment to its sanctification.

The author has used first hand sources in writing this book. It is not strictly a biography. It is rather an account of the salient points of the teaching and organising activity of the founder of the Association Opus Dei, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Albás. The writer has had necessarily, therefore, to bring out many of the more predominant traits of the personality of Monsignor Escrivá. Thus, each chapter of the book not only gives the main facts about the life of the founder of Opus Dei, but, also, carefully highlights the logical consequences of his teaching and work, and the outlook these consequences generate for Catholic layfolk and the secular priests who belong to the Association, or who share its ideals.

Thus, for example, his vision of marriage as a vocation, and his ideal of Christian homes as bright and cheerful, are dealt with when recounting his childhood in a deeply Christian family. The Mass as the centre of the interior life is treated while his years in the seminary in Saragossa are described. He put into practice his teaching that one has to sanctify oneself through work by an absorbing pastoral activity. People were drawn to the Association he founded through his loyal friendship with them. This apostolate of friendship is seen as the normal way for layfolk to lead others to God. The word Catholic takes on a fuller meaning as one discovers the universal outlook he had even when there were only a handful of members of Opus Dei. He drew strength from a deep awareness of God as Father which enabled him to come through the many difficulties that beset him, from being persecuted and on the run during the Spanish Civil War, to the misunderstanding by some people of his teaching on the universal call to holiness. His spirituality is for people living in the world who must live the Christian virtues in a way that corresponds to their state. Freedom in both temporal affairs and in the spiritual life — in keeping always with the Church's teaching — is something he stoutly defended.

By the seventies, Opus Dei had spread throughout the five continents and its membership included people of all sections of society, the vast majority of them married, and was still spreading. Monsignor Escrivá undertook a series of visits to meet as many people as possible involved in the apostolates of Opus Dei in Europe and America. These visits were exhausting but rewarding, and on his return he settled back to work at the international centre from which the Association is directed in Rome. He died suddenly in June 1975. Since his death, hundreds of thousands of people, some associated with Opus Dei and others not, have experienced the effect of his intercession using a widely circulated prayer for private devotion.

This book is worth reading not only because it gives a factual account of the founder of Opus Dei and the Association itself. It gives, in addition, an analysis of an approach to the problems of living the Christian life in our world of today that is wholly in accord with the call for renewal of the Christian life of the Second Vatican Council. Where it is most helpful is the combination of enthusiastic fidelity to the teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff and the novel practicality and normality in the means of living out this renewal that is shown in the life of Monsignor Escrivá.

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