



Opus Dei:

The members of the Opus Dei are living proof that any kind of labor can be a stepping stone to sanctity.

FROM an unimposing three-story building on Chicago's South Side, a magnificent spiritual message is being sent out, a message that is going to have a tremendous effect on the lives of many American Catholics.

For there, in a quiet residential district, the Chicago unit of Opus Dei, the first United States branch of the Church's first secular institute has been established. Founded in Madrid in 1928, this "new form of a canonical life of perfection," as the Holy Father characterized it, has already flowered in most of the countries of Western Europe as well as

in Mexico and South America.

"We hope the spirit of the times has prepared American Catholics for Opus Dei," says Father Joseph L. Muzquiz, director of the Chicago branch and former civil engineer and professor at the Civil Engineering School in Madrid. Apparently his hopes are being realized, for already in the few months the group has been in the United States applications and inquiries from many parts of the country have come to his office.

Like the Church's Orders and Congregations, Opus Dei was response to the needs of the times.

By Donald J. Thorman

Symphony At Four O'Clock

By ANABEL ARMOUR

The quick boy was a symphony in tan
From sun-streaked hair down to his tawny toes
As, four o'clock releasing him, he ran
Across a lot the way a rabbit goes.
Three leaps ahead and then a pause to see
A small green lizard dart around a rock,
A red squirrel circle up a linden tree:
Gulping in clean white wind and taking stock
Of things not found on blackboards nor in books,
He has all knowledge cupped in his brown hand
For earth is speaking everywhere he looks
Through things a lean tan boy can understand.
Without a question, trees and grass and birds
Are more important than a book—and words.

The Madrid of 1928 was outwardly a worldly and materialistic city, but underneath this superficial exterior the heart of a new religious movement began to beat with the sureness of God's grace. In that year, Jose Maria Escriva, a brilliant twenty-six year old priest, who held a doctorate in civil law before entering the seminary, began working with groups of students who helped him in the task of succoring Madrid's poor and needy. Truly this group which became known as Opus Dei was the Work of God, for when the founder was made a Monsignor in 1947 he could number his spiritual sons in numerous countries.

Besides his work among students, Monsignor Escriva has preached countless retreats to priests, religious and the laity. The subject-matter of his many books runs the gamut from the spiritual life to civil law and not a few of his works have hit the best-seller lists in Spain. That his indelible example hasn't been wasted was evidenced recently when he presented the Holy Father with a bound collection of more than one hundred volumes of scientific works published by Opus Dei members.

Following the plan laid down by Monsignor Escriva, the group has certain basic objectives which are realized in as many ways as there are members. Its general aim is that its members sanctify themselves through the practice of the evangelical counsels—poverty, chastity and obedience—and through an observance of Opus Dei's own constitutions.

More specifically, although it works among all classes, it aims at influencing the professional classes and the other leaders of our civil society to live and act according to the teachings of Holy Mother Church and if where possible to persuade them to

practice the evangelical counsels also. Through such a program it hopes to spread the desire for sanctity among laymen in every walk of life and to instruct them in how to attain their goal. The fact that Opus Dei already counts numerous government officials, professional men, working men and students among its members should dispel any doubt that its program is too idealistic for practical men.

In the United States, Opus Dei has already begun to labor among the ranks of students and professional men. The members feel that is the best way to begin their work here, for once such men are trained and imbued with the spirit of the Institute their positions will give them a vantage point from which their spirituality may overflow into the hearts of others. Opus Dei has separate sections for men and women, with occasional exceptions being made to admit married members in auxiliary capacities. Those who devote their lives to the Institute take their temporary or perpetual vows privately, the same as any one of the laity may do under proper guidance.

Male or female, however, the members of Opus Dei all work for the same objective: to perform the apostolate cheerfully, humbly and for the love of God.

Universal charity is essential to the work of the Institute. All mankind is to be the recipient of its members' love. Catholic, non-Catholic, pagan and agnostic—all are equally objects of Opus Dei's Christlike affection for souls. In their spiritual training and life members of the Institute must constantly develop a genuine sympathy and appreciation of man's defects and virtues.

Cheerfulness and joy is another requisite for the Apostolate. Members are admittedly ascetics, but their as-

ceticism is a happy, vibrant thing drawing them closer to God. For that very reason, cheerfulness is especially cultivated as the flowering of their whole and entire consecration to the service of Holy Mother Church.

As a further proof of their complete dedication to Christ, the members of the Institute, both individually and collectively, must love and cultivate humility. There is no secret about the Institute or its work, but the Institute's greatest glory is to live without human glory and to seek its reward only in eternity.

Already the effectiveness of Opus Dei's apostolate has been proved by the opening of the process of beatification for one of its members, who died only six years ago. Isidoro Zorano, who was born in Buenos Aires in 1902 and came to Spain at the age of three, was a living example of everything that Opus Dei means.

In 1927, Isidoro became an industrial engineer and began work on the electrification on the Spanish railroads. Three years later, in his search for sanctification, he joined Opus Dei and under the close direction of Monsignor Escriva, he trod the path which was to lead him to the sanctity he desired so much. He went his way quietly and without fanfare. Yet, the end of each day brought him that much closer to holiness. The year 1932 found him appointed inspector of locomotives and tenders at the railroad's general workshops in the seaport town of Malaga. From early morning, when he began with meditation and Mass, through the long work day until far into the evening after he had finished teaching mathematics at the Technical School and the students who sought his personal advice had left his rooms, his day was permeated with the spirit of Opus Dei. In the free time that he had, he engaged in some works of Catholic Action and devoted himself to works of mercy at local charitable institutions.

He further demonstrated his charity, a trademark of Opus Dei, when in 1936 during the Civil War he remained in Madrid to give material and spiritual aid to those who were imprisoned, frequently risking his life for them during the persecutions. When the War ended in 1939, he was appointed to an important post in the railroad system, at the same time continuing his heavy duties in the Institute. It was not long before his years of giving himself to those who needed him began to tell on his health. In July, of 1943 after being bedridden for six months he died as he had lived—joyfully, humbly and in the love of God.

Father Muzquiz, who holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of

Madrid, was also a civil engineer in Spain and he knew Isidoro well. "We who were associated with Isidoro knew that he was very holy," he said, "but we didn't realize just how much his influence was felt until after his death. It wasn't long after before we began to hear of favors granted through his intercession from such places as Rome, Portugal, Spain, and even from many places in the United States." The opening session of the beatification process was held in October, 1948. "Before the secret hearings began," Father Muzquiz said, "I was amazed to hear non-Catholics and even anti-Catholics say, 'We didn't agree with Isidoro's religion, but we knew that man was a saint and we are ready to go wherever necessary to help that he was.'"

Only one or two per cent of the Institute's members are priests and their number is purposely kept small because this is primarily an apostolate for laymen. The President-General, Monsignor Escriva, the founder, maintains headquarters in Rome. Father Muzquiz is a good example of an Opus Dei priest. He became affiliated with the Institute in 1933 and was a lay member for many years, a requisite for Opus Dei priests, before being selected to study for the priesthood. He studied at the diocesan seminary of Madrid and was ordained in Rome in 1944.

In February, 1947, the Holy Father promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* declaring the secular institutes as a form of canonical perfection. A few days later, on the recommendation of eight cardinals, two Patriarchs, twelve Archbishops and many Bishops in whose diocese Opus Dei had been established, the *Decretum Laudis*, highest recognition of a religious institution's merits was granted making Opus Dei an Institute of Pontifical Right.

When it was decided to establish the Institute in the United States, Father Muzquiz was selected to go with the pioneer group. With the encouragement and blessing of His Eminence, Cardinal Stritch, he and a few members of the Institute arrived in Chicago during the summer of 1949 to begin laying the foundations.

Provision has been made for as many people as possible to live in the remodeled three-story building which presently serves as the United States headquarters for Opus Dei. Not only members but students and professional men who wish to live in a spiritual atmosphere are welcomed to live there. Room is also being set aside for those who wish to stay over weekends to take advantage of the weekend retreats (Continued on page 23)

WORDS FOR A FULL LIFE

FRANCISCAN LOVE

By PASCAL VARNSKUHLER, O.F.M.

*He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.*

—Coleridge

FRANCIS BERNADONE of Assisi and of the world had at long last turned to God. Gone were his rich trappings, his coat of many colors, his knightly armor, his midnight revels, his arrogance; instead, one saw a little poor man in sandals and a simple peasant's frock, out at the elbows and travel-stained, who was, according to the Assisians, not a little "mad." But beneath that forbidding exterior there was a heart as boundless as the universe, as multiple in its loves as there are creatures of God; there was a will whose determination could fire the world with those same loves, as it later actually did; there was, in a word, the soul of a poet who lived his poetry—who, having sung his "Cantic to the Sun," or "Song of the Creatures," as it is sometimes called, might well have composed the aforementioned lines of Coleridge as to the identity of loving and praying.

For, if there was one thing that Francis of Assisi knew, it was the necessity of love, or charity, when one is in the market for eternal salvation.

But what Francis knew was of the twentieth century have long ago forgotten. Erroneous although the concept certainly is, and no matter how often we may have been told so, most of us still cling to the idea that to be pious or religious one must pray verbally without ceasing. Thus the man or woman who spends more time than anyone else with hands clasped on breast and with eyes either cast down or raised to heaven in possible ecstasy, or who almost literally inhabits a church in the seclusion of sanctity—a veritable saint to top all saints, regardless of the life he leads otherwise. Seldom, if ever, do we recognize the one truth which in all its splendor tells us, through Coleridge, that the best prayer to God is a life in accord with His wishes.

Once we have learned this fact we can readily understand how someone can, despite physical or intellectual disability, pray verbally, still become a saint of the first rank; indeed, how the most ignorant laborer can outstrip the most acutely intellectual theologian in his race for the favor of God. Such was the creed of the Troubadour of Assisi; such, truly, is the philosophy of his followers—the preeminence of man's will, the motivating force, the very residence, of love in man, over the sterility of the human intellect standing forth alone—a sterility so prevalent in the scientific world of today!

"That which a man most loves shall in the end destroy him"—so runs a sentence

from the ancient Greeks. Although often but a half-truth, and certainly completely false in reference to love for God, it is only too often too literally true in these, our times. Man has become a slave of his own creations. Having grown enamored of the offspring of his mind—his radio, television, radar, airplanes, and atom bombs, to mention but a few—he has by the not too difficult route of intellectual pride so fallen in love with his mind itself that he has long denied his heart and will their just dues of loving the one and only Creator and His creatures. Is it any wonder, then, that his heart has so atrophied through disuse that, when he at long last discovers that the wages of not loving is hell, he will be no more capable of such true love than sticks and stones, and senseless things? Place such a state of affairs side by side with the tenets of the Poorville and his disciples and you have in conflict the two proverbial words referred to by the Divine Son of Mary when He spoke of the children of darkness and the children of light.

Distinctly Franciscan, however, as a philosophy of love may be, it is still more characteristic of its brown-robed adherents when it is universal in its scope. Coleridge admonishes us that he who would pray well must love "all things both great and small." Obviously in the word "things" he includes, on the one hand, our fellow-men, and, on the other, excludes all things inherently evil, such as sin. So does St. Francis, but, whereas other founders and expositors of religious life insist more on self-denial in regard to the things of this life in preference for those of eternity, the little "madman" of Assisi was not so mad after all! Although he emphasized for his followers the necessity of going without scrip or purse or anything—in fact, insisted on absolute poverty—the blue lewis of Penitentialism or of the Baptists and Calvinists had nothing in common with him. Rather he accentuated the positive! Love all creatures, he said, but love them for God's sake; go "through nature to nature's God!" Love and use, if you must, or will, the things, the creatures, of this life, but do so because they remind you of the goodness, the greatness, and the glory of your Creator. Let the dawn be for you both His Maternity and His Resurrection. Bethlehem or Eternal Life! Let the sunset be the wound in His pelliculating side. Let the shimmering silver moon be His own Blessed Mother. Let even the tiniest trinket reflect not the wisdom of its maker, man, but rather that of the Creator from whom all wisdom comes!

Instantly the Indian came to life. "Hey!" he called after her in perfect English, "that'll be four bits!"

Sally made a small sound that was halfway between a sigh and a groan. Her point stressed, she murmured to Bob, "You see?"

Bob only laughed as he paid the red tip on the fifty cents demanded for the privilege of taking his picture. Then Bob caught sight of someone else and lifted a friendly hand in salute. Sally turned.

It was Father Basil, just crossing the street. "Thought I'd look over the hamburger situation," the Padre called to the two on the boardwalk.

Bob and Sally laughed delightedly. Father Basil was so gloriously human. That was just one of the reasons that made him beloved in the hearts of both red men and white.

"I've got a dreadful weakness for hamburgers," the priest continued, making his way toward the nearest stand. "I can stand the smell of 'em just so long, then I have to—"

He broke off in the midst of the sentence. From the direction of the rodeo grounds had come an uproar. A yell of anger and a pounding of hoofs. A woman screamed. Men yelled.

Sally and Bob and Father Basil all whirled at the same time. Then stared in frozen horror.

Down the wide street, in a cloud of dust, came the menace. Head lowered. Eyes flaming and nostrils distended. Old Satan! Old Satan, the killer. Old Satan—making straight for Father Basil!

"How did he break out of the chutes?" questioned Sally's frantic mind. "Oh, why doesn't somebody do something?"

But no one stirred. Along the boardwalks, people stood like they had been petrified. After all, nobody carried a gun. Not even a riata. And faster and faster, like a bolt of black lightning, came those slashing hoofs.

Meanwhile Father Basil stood there, helplessly in the middle of the street, as if too bewildered to move. Sally saw his hands instinctively reach for the big brown crucifix at his waist. She saw his lips move as though in prayer.

In panic, Sally's eyes swept the street. Looking for an avenue of escape. But there was none. Not a tree in sight. All the stores were closed for the holiday.

Through the girl's subconscious mind flashed the memory of the old lady in the grandstand. Her assertion that Old Satan was harmless, his ferocity only showmanship. But those reddened eyes, those wide-spread nostrils looked very real!

Sixteen terrible seconds sped past. Then—a sudden movement. It was

Bob. A lithe spring and he was in the street. On a run he started toward the advancing steer. And as he ran, he was waving Sally's big coat. The fur wrap spread out like a sail before him.

And just when Old Satan was so close that the Padre must have felt the steer's hot breath, Bob sprang between. Throwing the fur coat over Old Satan's head with a grace that would have done credit to a Spanish toreador.

In sudden confusion, the steer gave a snort of surprise. With a little splattering of gravel, he slid to a stop, dazed and bewildered.

In that moment of hesitation, Bob took advantage. He caught the blinded steer by the curved horns. Bearing down with all his might. Old Satan bellowed with rage. He pawed at the earth. He tossed his head, trying to shake off the thing that was pressing down on him.

But Bob clung as though nailed there. A quick twist. And the next instant the steer was lying prone on the ground. There had been good reason for Bob Henderson winning that bull-dogging contest!

There was another snort from the steer, a snort of fright now. Instantly the town came to life. Voices started to hum. From out of the service stations, out of the hot dog stands, out of the rodeo grounds, men came pouring. Men with ropes. Eager to lend a hand.

Seconds later, Old Satan was firmly roped and hog-tied. Then a cowboy spurred his horse, back toward the rodeo grounds, dragging Old Satan behind him. Old Satan, bawling and protesting, now as harmless and as limp as a bag of meal.

People pressed forward, surrounding Bob. Father Basil, mopping beads of moisture from his forehead, thrust out a hand.

"Good work, Lad!" he exclaimed as their hands gripped.

Sally, her eyes shining like twin sapphires, felt a tug at her sleeve. It was the old lady of the grandstand.

"My dear," the latter said generously, "you can be very proud of your beau. The way he bull-dogged that steer—why, that was really worthy of one of those brave young men of my own time! What did you say the name was? Stevenson? Of course! I remember now. Phil Stevenson used to be an old sweetheart of mine. A mighty fine lad, too, Phil was. He had romance, my dear. The same romance that died with the old west. I remember—"

But Sally was no longer listening. Sally was too busy looking at Bob. Romance dead? Why, shucks! Romance was like love—it was something that lived forever!

being inaugurated for both members and those interested in the work of the Institute. Members who are unable to live at the Institute's home will also be able to stay over week-ends or whenever possible to replenish their spiritual energies for the task of breathing the life of the Spirit into the clay of their ordinary, daily lives. The house, with its private chapel, is always open to anyone who is interested and Father Muquizz always finds time to consult with anyone seeking advice or information.

Life in the Opus Dei house is an informal family life. The members share their joys and sorrows and help and encourage each other just like members of any natural family. If the contagious holy joy and happiness which greeted this writer as he wandered around the building is any indication, it won't be long before it is a big family.

"In every accidental this branch is going to be American," Father Muquizz says. To prove his point, he has already applied for his citizenship papers.

The Institute not only doesn't interfere with the professional activity of its members, but so long as they act in accord with the Faith it helps and encourages them to advance as far as possible knowing that their advanced positions allow them a greater chance to help save souls. Opus Dei has no specific form of exterior action allowing in each member's professional life complete freedom as to his choice of any social, political or economic doctrine that doesn't conflict with Faith or morals.

The members of Opus Dei are not religious; they are strictly laymen. They are doctors, lawyers, businessmen, students, newspaper or other professional men who consecrate their whole lives and work to God and the salvation of souls. According to the Apostolic Constitution, *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, they must live, work and dress like other people in their profession, the only difference being that they have supernaturalized their work through their personal dedication to God.

Perhaps the whole life of a member of Opus Dei may best be summed up in the words which a companion of Isidoro Zorzano wrote on the day of that saintly man's death: "Isidoro is dead. He passed through life unnoticed. He fulfilled his duty. He loved much. He was faithful to the little things. And he sacrificed himself always."