

A NOTE FROM THE WEBMASTER

This is a collection of sample items about Opus Dei, the semi-secret church within a church.

Whether or not it meets your definition of "cult" is irrelevant. Becoming aware of the OD "modus operandi" is what's important.

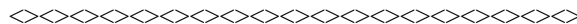
In this collection of papers you will find one which gives the address of ODAN ("Opus Dei Awareness Network"). If you are interested in much additional timely info about OD, contact them about their Newsletter.

Much has been said about how children are abused by OD, but little about abuse of adults, their spouses & their families. In this collection you will be able to read personal testimonies from such adults.

To my knowledge, nothing has been said, to date, about the fact that OD teaches the satanic lie of ***EVOLUTION***. Centuries-old Catholic teaching is anti-evolution. This official Catholic position has never been reversed or abrogated by any official Church pronouncement, although a number of the hierarchy have given their publicized personal opinions in favor of this current anti-Scriptural "world view".

Please join me in prayer for a remedy to the spiritual & psychological abuses of OD & for those countless souls who have been wounded by it.

In Christ,
webmaster



5 Sept 1997

National Catholic Reporter

Opus Dei Inside Story : Book By A Survivor

BEYOND THE THRESHOLD: A LIFE IN OPUS DEI

Maria del Carmen Tapia

Continuum Publ, 364 pages, \$29.95 hardcover

Review by Kaye Ashe*

The little I knew about Opus Dei before reading this book was enough to make me uneasy about the increasing strength and visibility of the organization in the Catholic Church. Maria del Carmen Tapia's story

deepened my wariness into something akin to dread. Her book is not, however, a cheap sensational exposé. It is the chronicle of an intelligent and sensitive woman who served the organization in responsible positions during her 18 year sojourn as a full member. Despite the **inhumane treatment** and psychological harassment she suffered at the hands of superiors during her last year in Opus Dei, she writes now "less from rancor than for the sake of historic justice."

Beyond the Threshold traces Tapia's journey from her first attraction to Opus Dei while working at the Council of Scientific Research in Madrid, Spain, to her **virtual imprisonment** at the organization's headquarters in Rome in 1965-1966, a **nightmare** that culminated in her forced request for release from her obligations to "The Work."

Tapia served for almost five years as **personal secretary** to the founder of Opus Dei, Msgr. José María Escrivá, and for nine years as **regional director** of the Women's Branch of Venezuela.

The view we get of Opus Dei in this account is that of a full member who served in the internal administration of the organization. It is the view, furthermore, of a disillusioned former member who stresses the sect-like characteristics of an institution she has come to view as a **"church within the Church."**

According to Tapia, her formation in Opus Dei bore the marks of **determined indoctrination**, not to say shameless brain-washing. Superiors encouraged a cultic and worshipful reverence for the founder, whose words and directives were never to be questioned or critiqued. His **authority was God-like**, and love for him was to outweigh love for parents or Pope.

The weekly "confidence" or fraternal chat, in which full members **bared their souls** to the local directress, molded them into unthinking instruments of the organization. The duty of "fraternal correction" imposed on members in their relation to one another and a coded system of reporting on those guilty of "bad spirit" or faults against unity, **reinforced an atmosphere of guilt and suspicion**.

Particularly in Rome, a brutal schedule of physical work, the lack of contact with family, friends or outside events and a detailed plan of spiritual development, narrowly focused on Opus Dei regulations, left little time for anything beyond "The Work" and "the Father" (Escrivá). Onto this background of **oppressive control**, Tapia sometimes sketches in crushing detail, furnished by a formidable memory, what she terms "the making of a fanatic."

What is bound to strike members of religious congregations is the similarity between the formation received by full members of Opus Dei ("numeraries," who compose about 20 percent of the membership) and the life lived in pre-Vatican II novitiates and convents. We find the same emphasis on physical labor, on rules, meditation, silence, distance from the distractions of "the world," leaving the house only in pairs, the handling of all financial affairs by appointed officials, suspicion of "particular friendships," celibacy, unquestioning obedience and mortification.

Indeed, all of this seems, if anything, bleaker and more pronounced in Opus Dei than in the old religious communities. In regard to mortification, for instance, no contemporary religious, to my knowledge, was ever asked to wear **the cilice** (a knotted band of rough wool worn tightly around the thigh during specified periods) or once a week to inflict upon herself **33 vigorous blows to the buttocks**.

The similarities that exist are all the more surprising given that the founding impulse of Opus Dei, and its continuing charism is to provide the church with a cadre of laymen and women served by priests ordained within the organization. Indeed, Escrivá insisted on the distinctly lay nature of the vocation and spirituality of the members of Opus Dei as opposed to those of members of religious congregations.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Tapia's chronicle is the contrast she draws between the male and female numeraries of Opus Dei, more marked apparently in her day than at present.

Women had to submit to a certain dress code, could not smoke and were required to sleep on wooden planks (the men had mattresses). Women designated as electresses have only passive voice, that is, their

opinion was to be taken into account on the final ballot for the election of the prelate (head of Opus Dei), which is cast by the general council, a body composed of the men in the central government of the organization.

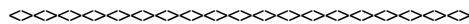
Furthermore women, whether numeraries or numerary auxiliaries (servants), were (are?) responsible for the cleaning, laundry, cooking and serving in both their own and the men's quarters and residences. Women, in other words, provided **cheap, quiet, invisible labor**, assuring a comfortable lifestyle for the men of the institution.

Readers who suspect that Opus Dei's recruitment policies are questionable, its financial and business practices sometimes devious and its deference to the powerful and wealthy self-serving, will find much to confirm their suspicions in Tapia's narrative. If they had reason to wonder at the speedy beatification of its founder in 1992, 17 years after his death, their mystification will double as they see him through Tapia's eyes: a self-preoccupied, overly-authoritarian man **given to loud and angry tantrums**.

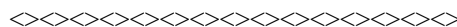
What they will not find is an answer to **why** the organization enjoys the support of the highest reaches of the Catholic hierarchy and why it has attracted 80,000 dedicated members in 90 nations around the globe. Those who wish to examine other faces of this complex, hierarchical and multi-national organization, and who would like to pursue further the polemic and paradoxes that continue to surround it, will find leads in the **lengthy bibliography** furnished by the author.

In addition to a highly personal account of the inner workings of Opus Dei, Tapia offers documentation in three appendices: correspondence with officials in Opus Dei who stubbornly refused to acknowledge her course of studies while she was a member; correspondence between the founder and her father; and letters to Pope John Paul II in which she cautions him against beatifying Escrivá.

This book, a bestseller in Spain, Portugal, Germany and Italy, is sure to attract the attention of a large American audience curious but not well-informed about the history, organization, policies, beliefs and driving force behind the 20th century Catholic phenomenon known as Opus Dei.



* Dominican nun, **Sr. Kaye Ashe**, is author of *The Feminization of the Church*. Sheed & Ward. 1997. She resides in Berkeley, California.



The Saturday Milwaukee Journal

A LIFE OF PIETY AND A LIFE OF PAIN

Kandace Hawkinson: Journal's Religion Reporter

Julie had just graduated from eighth grade when she made the decision that eventually ripped apart her family - she joined the Catholic lay organization that has come to be known as the Work of God, Opus Dei.

This is her story and the story of her family and her best friend.

This is the story of one young girl's attempts to live up to a standard of piety that left her confused and totally alone.

"I was no one, nothing," Julie said in an interview, thinking back on her time with the organization between **1962** and **1966**.

Since Opus Dei was founded in **1928** by a young Spanish priest intent on recognizing the sacredness of everyday life, the controversial organization has grown to include **70,000** members worldwide. The member-

ship includes several priests, other celibate individuals who contribute their earnings and time to Opus Dei and vow to remain celibate, and individuals who have joined the organization after marrying. Those who do not consider Opus Dei as their sole vocation, but who support its work, are known as **cooperators**.

At the age of **14**, Julie chose to be a celibate member and left home to live at **Petawa Residence**, Opus Dei's local center **for women** at 1331 N. Astor Street, Milwaukee. The Layton Study Center at 12900 W. North Avenue, **Brookfield**, is its counterpart **for men**.

Both centers offer a variety of club activities to introduce **fifth-grade through college-age** students to the Opus Dei ideal of practicing simple virtues each day. For adults, the centers offer discussions, instruction in Opus Dei's conservative interpretation of doctrine, and evenings of recollection when people are to examine their conscience and pray.

Many people have attested to the value Opus Dei has given to their lives. Julie said Opus Dei had **almost taken her life away**.

"It's taken me **nearly 15 years** to get back on my feet," she said. "When I left Opus Dei I didn't know how to trust anyone, I didn't know if anyone would like me and I didn't know if I could like myself."

Now has a family

Today, Julie is a vibrant woman in her mid-30s with a family and home in a western suburb of Milwaukee. She decided to tell her story after *The Milwaukee Journal* ran an article in January on two local Opus Dei centers and the programs they offer.

Julie asked that her name not be used.

"I know I could never destroy Opus Dei with my story and I'm not sure I even want to do that," she said at the start of her interview. "I don't want to hurt people who are really getting closer to God that way. But I do want them to think before they allow their children to participate."

Julie's mother, who was a supernumerary member of Opus Dei for several years herself, now wishes someone had given her similar advice.

"I more or less **gave Opus Dei my four daughters**," she said. Julie, her **oldest** child, got the most heavily involved, pledging her life to the organization. **Two** other daughters were not very interested in Opus Dei from the start and eventually stopped attending meetings. A **fourth** daughter, like Julie, pledged her life to the group but **later left** it.

Meetings were fun

Julie's mother first became involved in Opus Dei in the **1950s** at the urging of an enthusiastic aunt. Opus Dei officials encouraged her to bring her daughters to some Saturday meetings.

The meetings seemed innocuous. Julie, in **fifth grade** at the time, recalls the meetings as "fun, free, happy times when we all sat around, had a short lesson on a virtue and then played guitars and sang."

But as Julie grew, there was increasing discussion during these activities about the possibility of her choosing to live a celibate life with Opus Dei as her vocation.

"No one came right out and said I had to do that," Julie said. "That's just all the girls talked about at the meetings."

At that time, the **choice** was hers to make upon graduating from **eighth** grade, though the minimum age for such vocation decisions has since been moved to **16-1/2**.

In Julie's case, there was no hesitation. At **14**, she wrote a letter stating her wish to commit her life to the organization.

"It just seemed the right thing to do," she said.

Friend disagrees

A good friend, who later followed Julie's example, said there was overt pressure to make the same decision.

Ann, who also asked that her real name not be used, said she had attended Opus Dei meetings no more than eight times with Julie before going to an Opus Dei summer camp and being told she had only two weeks to make up her mind about following God by joining Opus Dei.

"We were kept busy at camp all day," she said. "Each night I would lay on my bed and tell myself 'Now, I have to stay awake and think.' And night after night, I fell asleep because I was so worn out."

"When it came to the day I had to decide, I still hadn't had time to think about it. But I was scared that I would be making a mistake if I said no."

Joining Opus Dei was a mistake for both Julie and Ann. Their lives changed drastically, though Ann was able to hide her involvement from her family for a year and a half.

Julie, who spent most of her high school years at Petawa Residence, spoke first of sleeping on **a board** at night, taking **cold** showers and wearing a chain with **barbed wire prongs** around one of her legs.

"You knew when you really made the ranks because they gave you a little white **whip** to use to beat yourself during prayers," Julie said..

Agrees with goals

She paused a long time after drawing forth those negative images, then she back-tracked a bit, not wanting to seem too harsh on Opus Dei.

"I do think the basic goal of Opus Dei - the idea of sanctifying your everyday life - is good, though it may seem a bit nebulous," she said.

That drew a quick response from Ann.

"We were not living an everyday, ordinary life with Opus Dei," Ann said. And the women listed the duties that came to fill their days: daily mass was required, as well as two half-hour prayer and meditation periods, three full rosaries and various required readings.

There was no time for outside activities at school, other than witnessing to friends, encouraging others time and again to attend Opus Dei meetings.

"We meet classmates now from Pius XI High School and we cringe, hoping they don't remember us, Ann said.

"And they don't," Julie adds, with an edge of bitterness. "We were just blanks back then." Julie and Ann both spoke of feeling that all ties to their true selves were stripped away by Opus Dei.

No possessions

This started with the lack of time for themselves and continued with instructions that they were to renounce any earthly possessions. **Money** earned by working after school had to be **turned over** to the organization. And once a year, the girls were asked to give up extra items they were at all attached to - items like clothing and **family pictures**.

The girls were told that Opus Dei was their new family, though their natural family was **told nothing** of the change.

"Every time I called Petawa, I was told Julie was at a meeting," her mother said. "They kept her from me and **they lied** to me. I was in Opus Dei myself, attending weekly meetings there, and even then, I couldn't see her."

Julie noted that both her incoming and outgoing mail was censored.

Tangled in a world of piety, pain

Ironically, Ann's decision to join Julie in Opus Dei marked the demise of a strong friendship that has been renewed only recently. The girls were **separated** in Opus Dei by **regulations** that stipulated things of consequence could be discussed only with one's spiritual directress.

"We could be together, but we couldn't talk about **anything important** so we gradually grew apart," Julie said.

Individuals were **encouraged to find fault** with themselves and others and ask permission from their directress to make corrections.

"Somewhere between all the corrections, the focus on the bad, and the beatings, my soul just began to grow lifeless," Julie said.

Late in her junior year, she began to question her life with Opus Dei, but leaving did not seem to be an option.

"I knew I wasn't happy and I wanted to live a normal life," she said. "I wanted to go to dances and date and be just like everyone else. But I was constantly told that Opus Dei was my vocation and I was so afraid of letting God down."

'She tried to express her confusion, but no one seemed to be listening. She grew more and more desperate.

At one point, she sneaked out a basement window of Petawa Residence and roamed the streets of Milwaukee, waiting for someone to come looking for her. No one came.

"I never even 'thought' of calling 'my family,'" she said.' "I was so isolated by then that I never even thought of that."

Near morning she returned to Petawa where she said "everyone simply ignored the situation."

"I ended up just screaming and crying and hanging onto a wall upstairs," she said. "Just hanging onto a wall - that was all I had."

A younger girl at the residence who was scared by the situation finally helped Julie's mother sneak upstairs one Saturday after a meeting. And Julie agreed to go home for a holiday.

But Julie returned to Petawa after attending another Opus Dei retreat. And her running and confusion continued.

Julie's father finally took matters into his own hands when Julie took a bus home for an evening and collapsed, sobbing hysterically in his arms all night.

"He told me, 'That's it. You Just can't make your own decisions now,' " Julie said. "And he stood in the vestibule at Petawa the next morning while I was upstairs packing my things."

Officials adamant

Julie said that even then, Opus Dei officials refused to acknowledge that the organization was creating trauma for her and tried to persuade her to stay.

"The directress took me aside and told me that if I left and then I ever changed my mind, I would probably never be allowed back in," Julie said. "And she told me I would never be happy doing anything else and everything would go wrong for me since I did have a vocation with Opus Dei."

"For years after that, whenever something went wrong, I thought God was punishing me."

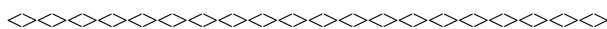
Her mother went through a similar period of guilt after being told by Opus Dei officials that she had ruined her daughter's vocation. She collapsed after a miscarriage that she attributed to that and required years of psychological counseling.

Julie herself refused to go to church for years, though she notes that she never stopped praying. She also went through years when she felt unable to leave her house for lack of trust in anything and anyone other than herself.

But in the end, the family has been able to pull together and individual identities have been reestablished.

"You can't believe how far we've come," she said.

"And that we attribute to our faith in God. Mom and I were talking just the other day about how that pulled us through. We never gave up on God."



The Weekend Australian

THE ONE WHO GOT AWAY

John Lyons (an interview)

Monica Pigott did not want to be "a shabby parent" -- she wanted to give her sons "that little edge" over others sitting for the HSC exams. She had heard about the Dartbrooke Study Centre in Sydney and was pleased that one afternoon a week 15-year-old Damien could receive special coaching there.

What she did not know was that, along with the tuition, he was receiving **little Sermons on the Mount**. At 16, he was gaining rare insights into the shadowy world of Opus Dei and being groomed to become a "numerary".

Damien adjusted to **Opus Dei's personal regime** -- cold showers, skipping meals, during winter throwing off a blanket or two to make it a bit colder, sleeping without a pillow, continual little mortifications.

But it was the more obvious instances that concerned him like their **attitude toward women**. Bolton used to ring up the women domestic staff on the internal phone system and say, "There'll be two extras for lunch" Slam! "You can come down and do the cleaning now". Slam! That's all he'd say. He wouldn't say hello or thanks.

They'd never be caught talking to a girl by themselves. "We were on a train once and this girl came and sat down. One of the numeraries got up, said 'Excuse me', and moved." Mothers were occasionally allowed into the centre but it was so male.

At 20, Damien is entering his third year at Sydney's St. Patrick's seminary where the Rector, Father Gerry Iverson, describes him as "solid" and -- significantly -- was "happy" about him being interviewed on Opus Dei.

Mrs. Pigott is bitter: she claims Opus Dei had Damien **signing his life away at 17**. "I told him 'If you wanted to go into the priesthood now and knocked on any presbyter door, they'll tell you to finish your education, get out and work, and when you've grown up a bit come back. They wouldn't even sit down and talk to a schoolboy let alone try to get him to sign an undertaking.'"

Says Damien: "That's why you can't go into the seminary until you're 19."

Damien was in "final formation stages" of a numerary **when he left**. His mother, concerned at apparent **personality changes**, phoned Opus Dei to say he would not be returning.

She says of his days in the organization: "It was like being haunted by a whole lot of male angels. They were everywhere. I knew something was wrong. Damien became intensely religious.

"He was always having long conversations with him (Bolton), they seemed to have more control over him than his parents and school. I said: 'Have you signed up with that lot?' He said, more or less, 'I reserve the right to answer questions -- **you are only my mother**; what I do is between me and God'.

"I said 'Get on that phone and tell that character (Bolton) you're out. He said 'I can't do that.' I said 'They've never seen your mother in action.'"

He said 'What could you do?' I said 'For a start I'll see the Apostolic Delegate.' That impressed Damien. He rang Bolton. He was here in 20 minutes. Damien had made the call, I felt I'd won."

Mrs. Pigott said Dartbrooke had sounded "wonderful".

"I said to David Bolton 'You're Opus Dei aren't you?' and he said 'Yes, we're Opus Dei.' He opened his coat: 'See, no secret microphones, no tape recorders, we're not a secret society.' He was so charming. The boys went there for coaching but they used to have little Sermons on the Mount and examinations of conscience and all this. But no one told us."

Damien recalls that while in Year 12, at Marist Brothers, Eastwood, he was appointed to help arrange the school dance: "Bolton said 'You shouldn't be going to a dance.' I said 'I'm on this committee, I have to.' They said 'Make sure you ring us up.' Three times during the dance I had to go to the public phone and ring him to let him know what was going on."

Six weeks after his 17th birthday, **Damien "whistled"** -- meaning he wrote to Rome asking to become a numerary: "From that moment I was treated as a numerary. After six months I was to make a formal commitment in front of Father Masso and a couple of other heavies but I got cold feet. There was a lot of pressure from my family; they were asking just about every priest and person they met what they knew about Opus Dei. **The answer was always: 'Not much.'**

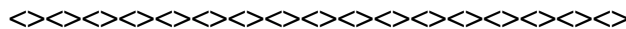
"When someone had 'whistled', for the next few days there were big smiles from everybody who knew. Each Opus Dei centre has this little tradition of 'holding the red lantern'. There is a red lantern, and when you're the youngest in a house to 'whistle' you've got to 'shine it out in the dark' until the next one can take it. You're not supposed to have the lantern for long."

Under Canon Law, Opus Dei members are not allowed to take **vows** so they make **solemn promises**. Accorded *de facto* numerary status, Damien would be greeted in Latin inside Opus Dei centres: they would say '*Pax*' (Peace) and he would reply '*In Aeternum*.' (For eternity)

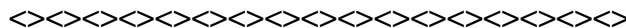
David Bolton became the dominant figure in Damien's life as his "director". He met privately with him once a week and also had a separate spiritual director, an Opus Dei priest; but the distinction between them was "fine."

"Supposedly the spiritual director was for things of the internal forum, the director for your own life, whether you were sticking to the norms of piety, how many souls you'd brought in, ideas about getting new people in."

Damien claimed Mr. Bolton controlled the Dartbrooke finances. "All the guys who worked in the centre had to **give their salaries straight over** to him when they came home. . . They had no money of their own. I didn't have any money. I was constantly being asked to make donations (if I had any pocketed money) or to give things up. It was continual. But you were talking about the product marketing engineer at (a major company) on his **\$60,000 a year**, he gave all that, this chief mining engineer from (another major company). one of the big financial advisors in town, teachers, publishing companies.



**'It was like being haunted
by a whole lot of male angels'**



"You had to go to Bolton and ask if you could have your \$2 for cigarettes. At the end of each month you had to present to Bolton a **detailed financial statement**, what you'd spent your money on -- toiletries, cigarettes, a beer, a book, a pen, anything. **All numeraries in the world** have to do that."

He said Mr. Bolton explained that money would be handed to him "because we have nothing."

Damien carried a notebook with him at all times "in case you did anything wrong or you thought of anything you could use in your prayers or tell your director. The experienced guys had the notebooks divided into sections: Prayer Life, Report to Director, names, addresses, etc.

"This Spanish model they work out of is one of continual Confessions, my wrongs, mortifications, to control the desires, the passions, the body." Opus Dei was obsessed with sex:

"Even looking at a girl would lead you down the wrong path: like a car going down a hill with no brakes."

Mrs. Pigott feared Damien was reporting to Opus Dei what occurred in their home. "We used to have family barbecues and you'd look up and David Bolton would be standing there. I always felt he knew

more about our family because he had Damien sort of in here as a **little inside mole** who had to tell him everything that happened and was said."

Damien says **he was told** his parents did not understand. "If they knew more about The Work, they'd understand." This was the comeback line. 'It's your spiritual life, your parents aren't responsible for that.'

"They were kind of saying your parents have got you to this point, for the rest of your life you are going to try to get them into Opus Dei."

He says Opus Dei monitored the books he read and it still observed the index of prohibited books begun by the Catholic Church in the 1870s -- generally abandoned in the 1950s in the lead up to Vatican II. "If you find me an Opus Dei person who's done studies in philosophy, for example, they don't take the broad view from the English to Americans to Greeks. Psychology is another area. Anything that's not straight and doctrinal, they won't let you near."

Damien claims he was **harassed** when he tried to leave. "Phone calls, meetings, this thing that you were running away from something, you've got something on your mind you can't talk to us about," he said.

"What is it?" they were continually saying. 'There's some sexual impurity you won't talk about, isn't there?' I'd say 'No, no, I just want to get out' and they'd say 'You've done something very wrong, you've committed a mortal sin, haven't you? If you go to confession it will be all right.'

"I said 'Leave it for two months, if I've changed my mind I'll call you.' 'No, no, we can't do that, Damien.' they said. I had to say 'No, stop it!' I was trying to get an HSC over and done with."

After HSC, Damien expected to win a scholarship to Warrane college - **"those they want to win, win"**.

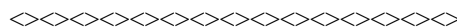
According to his mother, he had always been "pretty relaxed" but **became distraught** while in Opus Dei. She said an Opus Dei priest rang her once and said "I hope Damien's studying".

"I said 'I don't know if he's studying'. He said 'I hope he does well in his exams.' I said 'He can only do the best he can and whatever he gets, we'll be happy with it.' He replied: 'Anyone who gets less than 400 is a **disgrace** -- I can't remember anyone who gets less than 400 anyway -- and shouldn't be on the Earth.' I said 'Father, **are you a Catholic priest?**' He said, 'Yes'. I said 'You don't sound very full of Christian charity to me.'

"How dare they! The Lord chose the fishermen, not the academicians."

Damien Pigott says on the superficial level Opus Dei looks "a good, solid traditional Catholic organization." "But anybody who starts to get involved will see the other side, this kind of octopus organization."

He accuses it of **using "covers"** -- his parents sent him to the Dartbrooke Study Centre for tuition and the Frontier Club for recreation. **"It's very clever.** There's never a photo of a numerary in any of their little things. It's the same thing with their girls' club at Tangara (Cherrybrook, Sydney). There are **big questions** why a non-denominational school (Tangara) has both a Catholic priest and a Blessed Sacrament chapel on the premises. It's not a Catholic school.



April 18, 1997

Catholic Herald

(England)

Opus Dei under fire for attack on disabled

Piers McGrandle

A senior Italian priest has called on the Vatican to **clamp down** on the arch-conservative group, Opus Dei, after its leader claimed that most disabled children were offspring of "impure parents".

Although Opus Dei **immediately denied** the claims, saying that they were "distorted" and "sensationalist", Mgr Vinicio Albanesi, who is president of various disabled organisations, said: "The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith should put such movements on trial which are anti-conciliar and anti-Christian because they deny the humanity of Christ and His redemptive death.

"The gaffe of Bishop Echevarria of Opus Dei is not as impromptu as it would appear; the accusation is part of an **anti-Christian spirituality** which denies any kind of love, respect and relationship", said Mgr. Albanesi.

The bishop's comments were **condemned** by The Italian Down's Syndrome Association, which expressed "horror and unease", and called on the bishop to apologise "to the handicapped and to those who care for them".

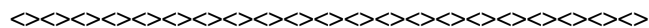
The **bitter row** followed a meeting of 1,500 Opus Dei followers in Sicily, in which Bishop Echevarria was quoted as saying that "according to scientific research", most handicapped people had been born to people who had "not entered into marriage in a pure state".

The bishop had not been aware that any members of the press were present. According to Opus Dei sources, the bishop had **thought he was at a closed meeting**, but the *Giornale de Sicila* newspaper carried his remarks.

Officials of the right-wing organisation, which has the support of the Pope and has much influence within the Vatican, **compounded the unease** by claiming that the bishop had been referring "not to handicapped people in the broad sense" but to "HIV-infected children born to HIV-infected parents".

In **response** to press criticism, Bishop **Echevarria** said: "I remember having criticised the phenomena, unfortunately not uncommon today, of sexual abuse, violence against women, pornography, etcetera, and the risk of unhappy negative consequences of all kinds inherent in a sexually promiscuous lifestyle. I did no more than re-iterate the teaching of the Catholic Church on the subject."

The Opus Dei movement was founded by Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, beatified by the Pope five years ago.

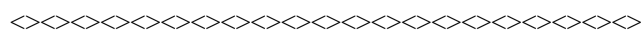


Note

It has been suggested that this is an example of "**mental reservation**" used by Opus Dei in such matters as its efforts at maintaining the semi-secrecy of its multi-national operation and **for dealing with contradictions** in general.

The **8 May 97** issue of *Catholic Standard* contained the following:

In the United States, Mary Jane Owen, executive director of the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, said two variations of Bishop Echevarria's alleged remarks were posted on the Internet. She wrote to Bishop Anthony M. Pilla, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops: "Whether a true report of his remarks or not, **its mere existence** undermines the efforts of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and His Holiness, John Paul II..."



EXAMPLE OF OPUS DEI SECRET PRACTICES

Opus Dei centers, schools, hostels, clubs, cultural centers, catering colleges, university residences, publishing houses, etc are rarely identified openly with Opus Dei, though they are financed, staffed and run by OD members -- but **not legally owned** by OD, *per se*.

Example

The 1994 Texas Catholic Directory lists the Opus Dei Center at 4610 Wingren, Irving, Texas. This property was purchased in 1991 for \$320,580.00 by the **Wingren Foundation Inc.** The phone was (1994) listed to Dr. Gerald Wegemer, an English professor at the University of Dallas (a Catholic institution).

There are numerous such situations around the world. For more examples and info about this Opus Dei *modus operandi* which substantiates their secretive nature, contact. . .

ODAN (Opus Dei Awareness Network Inc)
P O B 4333
Pittsfield MA 01202-4333

tel : 413 499 7168
FAX : 413 499 7860
website: <http://www.odan.org>

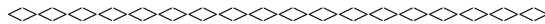
ODAN's objective is to provide education & outreach to those impacted by Opus Dei. Inquire about their newsletter.

A helpful reference work

Parents' Guide to Opus Dei. J.J.M. Garvey. 3RD printing, 1993. Sicut Dixit Press, 305 Madison Ave #1146, New York, NY 19165.

This small booklet contains an analysis of the prelature of Opus Dei, according to Vatican guidelines on new religious movements.

The booklet also contains Opus Dei's reaction & official response, along with commentary by J.J.M. Garvey.



1997
Brooklyn Tablet

***Opus Dei* Tries to Defend Against Cult Charges**

John Thavis

ROME (CNS) - Fifteen years after it was given a unique place in the church, Opus Dei is still battling what it calls "myths" and misrepresentations about its role.

In recent interviews, Opus Dei officials described the resurfacing of two accusations that they view

as particularly unfair: allegations of a political strategy and a cult-like control of members.

Both accusations are not only false, Opus Dei officials said, but they exhibit a basic misunderstanding about the function of the organization, which celebrates its 70th anniversary next year.

Founded by Blessed Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer in Spain, Opus Dei sought to attract Catholic lay members through its rigorous program of spiritual formation. In **1982**, it was made a personal prelature - a new church structure that functions somewhat like a dispersed diocese - and today it has **78,000** lay members in more than **50 countries**.

Pope John Paul II has frequently praised Opus Dei and has named several of its clerical members as bishops. Opus Dei says the pope appreciates its basic goal: helping lay people sanctify their own lives and their work.

The organization's higher profile, however, has led some critics to claim an Opus Dei "design" in placing members in influential positions.

In Spain, the fact that **several Cabinet ministers** in the current government have ties to Opus Dei has been noted in newspapers and viewed by some commentators as a sign of the organization's return to political power.

In **Peru**, Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani Thorpe, an Opus Dei **member** and a friend of President Alberto Fujimori, has been a key mediator in the Tupac Amaru hostage crisis. That, too, has been seen by some as evidence of a growing political role.

Giuseppe Corigliano, Opus Dei's **spokesman** in Rome, said the critics fail to make a crucial distinction: that Opus Dei forms its members spiritually and leaves their political lives alone.

"Opus Dei doesn't give instructions to individuals (about politics), but it does press individuals to take their own responsibility in society," he said.

Corigliano said that when alive, Blessed Escrivá would pointedly express his disinterest in the political careers of members. Likewise today, he said, the organization does not aim to put its members in political high places; Opus Dei officials cannot even give advice on such matters.

Opus Dei hopes its members bring the Gospel to bear on political affairs, but in a way that advances the "apostolate of Christ, not the apostolate of Opus Dei," Corigliano said.

It's not a question of dual allegiance, he added.

Faith an Fuel

"Opus Dei is like a gas pump. Members come in for a fill-up of spirituality, then they do what they want," he said. "Those who believe Opus Dei is promoting a secret agenda in society are simply mistaken", he said.

Corigliano said **he thinks** part of the misunderstanding about Opus Dei lies in the mistaken assumption by many, especially in Europe, that lay Catholic activists answer to their clerical superiors. But Opus Dei, while it has a strict spiritual program, emphasizes that lay people's sanctifying role in their work stems from their baptism, not from a superior's directive, the spokesman said.

Opus Dei members, he said, are taught that laity have a basic freedom and "do not live their vocation as an extension of the church hierarchy."

Part of the image problem also stems from Opus Dei's early years under the Spanish regime of Gen.. Francisco Franco. Opus Dei **officials say** the organization's presence in the Franco government has been widely exaggerated. From 1939-75 only **eight** of 116 Cabinet members belonged to Opus Dei.

But in a way, that's **beside the point**, Corigliano said. "It **might have been 36** ministers, and maybe in the future there will be even more Opus Dei members in the Cabinet," he said.

Communal and Celibate

Opus Dei "numerary" members are celibate, live in small communities and have spiritual advisers within the organization. This type of close guidance, combined in some cases with parental disapproval, has led to accusations that the organization has turned children away from their families.

Opus Dei considers this an ancient accusation faced by religious orders and other church groups through the centuries. But recent allegations of "**cult**" **methods** in Opus Dei were viewed as especially misleading.

In January a former Opus Dei member who left and became a critic of the organization, Maria del Carmen **Tapia**, made a highly publicized visit to Rome to help form an association called "**Families Stricken by Opus Dei**." It was modeled after anti-cult organizations in the U.S.

Tapia said young Opus members are **counseled not to tell** their parents about their relationship with the organization and that members are emotionally cut off from their families.

Opus Dei officials **have denied** those allegations, saying young members are never told to keep their families in the dark and are routinely informed of their right to leave the organization. But they note that historically in the church, some parents have had problems accepting their children's spiritual vocations - especially if it includes celibacy.

"Even the family of St. Francis was not pleased with his conversion," Corigliano said.

Marta Manzi, an Italian noncelibate member of Opus Dei, said two of her seven children belong to the organization. Yet their family remains close, even with their different approaches to spiritual life, she said.

What some parents find difficult to accept about Opus Dei, she said, is when a radical change occurs in their child. The person who used to go to the disco every night now goes to Mass every day, for example.

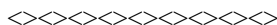
"Often, the reaction is to criticize the child. The child can resent this and move away emotionally from the family," she said.

Thomas Bohlin, an Opus Dei member from Chicago currently studying in Rome, said he thinks the "cult" label is the latest attack strategy against Opus Dei.

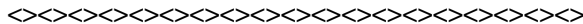
"Basically they are trying to terrorize parents as to what Opus Dei is," he said. But he added he thought that in general people were not believing Opus Dei was a cult.

Bohlin said Opus Dei's image is **better now** than in the past, largely because it is making itself better known through publications and, most recently, through an Internet site:

<http://www.opusdei.org>



Info in this article consists of some truths, half truths & untruths. Emphasis is on children, though children are not generally capable of making such assessments. The criticisms of adult ex-members is ignored, with the exception of Tapia. This article also contains double-talk, as the part about Spain's Francisco Franco.



October 3, 1997

National Catholic Reporter

Letters to Editor

Time to re-examine

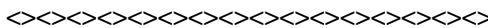
Sr. Kaye Ashe's critique of Maria Tapia's book *Beyond the Threshold* raises many concerns about Opus Dei and confirms all of my own findings regarding its presence here in Northern California. Her sense of dread is well-founded.

My comments must not be construed as judgmental of the spiritual values of the group, most of which we all share as members of Christ's body, but rather the overly zealous, psychologically devastating methods used by Opus Dei members to control those deemed guilty of "bad spirit" within the assembly. These are not of God.

Perhaps it is time for Opus Dei to re-examine its inner structure and purposes. Perhaps it is time for it to re-examine the nature of its founder, Msgr. José María Escrivá. Perhaps it is time for the Vatican to humbly admit it made a mistake in his speedy and unethical beatification and reopen his case to allow for additional evidence from people such as Maria Tapia.

If Escrivá is allowed to remain "Blessed," the outrage of women and thinking men everywhere demands the retirement of the Vatican from the saint-making business.

NANCY J. MCGUNAGLE
Petaluma, Calif.



March 29, 1992

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER

"The Work" and I

Tina Bell

Out of the debris of Wood-stock and Watergate came an adversarial culture even more peculiar than the drug-eating New Left of the '60s - a new orthodoxy bent not so much on the *reinforcement* of Church and family as on the *destruction* of their *enemies*.

The left had established a hegemony over the American intelligentsia which lasted until the election of Ronald Reagan, accusing the right of causing everything from pollution to war.

But with the Reagan landslide of the '80s, political and religious orthodoxy came into its own. My husband and I were among the bright new couples who voted for Reagan. We were always praised for our youth when we joined political movements, school boards and parish committees. *Roe vs. Wade* had unified the young, new religious right, and John Paul II's election gave us a leader.

But we **needed an attitude**, a posture, to replace those we'd given up with our bell-bottomed jeans. We also needed camaraderie. We needed a base from which to battle the dangers of feminism and public school liberalism.

I had returned to the practice of Catholicism with the baptism of my first child. Like other returnees, I harbored a rather **rarified orthodoxy**, coming to church dreaming of incense, Gregorian chant and the Latin Mass. I found mediocre hymns, homilies based on *Peanuts* comics and parish priests all too willing to please their flocks with "relevant" equivocations of *Humanae Vitae*. American **liberalism**, it appeared, had found a roost in the Church

Orthodox Catholics in America found themselves increasingly isolated from the hierarchy and each other, sustained for the most part by love and admiration for a Pontiff far away in Rome. My own loneliness was almost unbearable until I came across an organization founded in 1929 by a Spanish priest, Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer. It was called Opus Dei ("Work of God" in English, or simply "The Work").

Opus Dei **offered strong orthodoxy** and camaraderie; its priests wore cassocks and said the *Novus Ordo* daily in Latin. Lay members, called **numeraries (celibate)** and **supernumeraries (single or married)** dressed conservatively and exuded the self-confidence of a **spiritual elite**. They were charming, friendly, intelligent -- and *young*. Whereas my parish allies in the struggle for the institution of a daily rosary or a Holy Hour once a month were often tired and embittered. The members of Opus Dei I met at their many receptions and gatherings had a vitality and self-confidence I drank in like water after a long desert journey.

In between frank disclaimers of any political or social allegiances, Opus Dei women emphatically espoused the importance of staying home to care for their children. All members accepted *Humanae Vitae* but went one step further than Paul VI -- it wasn't surprising to hear of families in the movement with 10 children. (I thought I was daring to have four!) "How many children do you have?" took on an ominous ring at gatherings.

The newcomer to an Opus Dei evening of recollection -- devotional activities were segregated by sex -- found, as if by magic, strong support for her most deeply held convictions (in my case, moral traditionalism) offered by attractively dressed strangers who outdid each other in cordiality. As I think back to my first months with Opus Dei, I remember that my commonest utterances were treated like profundities. Surrounded -- even in my home parish and parochial school -- by political and doctrinal liberalism with a dose of crypto-feminism, it's no surprise, in hind-sight, that when Opus Dei reached out its motherly arms to me, I ran to them.

How much more attractive was a group of people who applauded me in an elegant Manhattan town-house, contrasted with meeting regular parishioners in an under-heated parish hall over little cups of kool-aid!

Opus Dei offered more than companionship; they offered an **elite path to holiness** (although everyone in Opus Dei **avoids** the word "elite") -- a way to live sanctity in daily life. *Everything* could make you holy. I especially remember one talk given by a numerary member reflecting the importance of always knowing the location of your scissors. Opus Dei was a refuge from my agnostic, sinful (more so than I thought) neighbors in church and my narrow-minded feminist friends in the neighborhood.

Those 400,000 people at Woodstock had reveled in looking and dressing exactly alike. They knew exactly what to do when it came to everything from clothing to diet, to sex and drugs.

Opus Dei, too, satisfied my need to be **told exactly what to do**. Now, here were women telling me where to put my scissors, how many children to have and how to dress for my husband when he came home from work.

My husband became a member, a supernumerary. His spiritual director, a layman, **told him** how to dress, pray and work. He came home every night ignoring my Opus Dei makeover and marched upstairs to pray. He was less grouchy than he'd been, perhaps, but he was also more distant. Every morning he took an ice cold shower; every night he said the same list of prayers in the same order; every week his director advised him on the most intimate areas of his personal life.

What finally saved me from complete psychological slavery wasn't my dignity as an individual; it was my slovenliness. I wasn't organized enough to join Opus Dei. **What saved my husband** from continued totalitarianism were his wariness and his strong human nature. And one by one I "lost" my Opus Dei friends. I'm back among the mass of ordinary parishioners now, a little less holy and a lot more humble.

Opus Dei's tyranny sounds petty -- its refugees' tales seem melodramatic. But the struggle for freedom is lonely and lifelong; its story is as trivial or as profound as each individual soul on its journey to God. A tiny wheel in a machine sounds expendable -- until you realize that **a human being isn't just a cog**.

President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Camillo **Ruini**; Archbishop of Montreal, Cardinal Jean Claude **Turcotte**; Archbishop of Monterrey, Cardinal Adolfo Suarez **Rivera**; Archbishop of Marseille, Cardinal Robert **Coffy**; Archbishop of Santiago of Chile, Cardinal Carlos Oviedo **Cavada**; and **retired** Cardinals Silvio **Oddi**, Pietro **Palazzini** and Edouard **Gagnon**.

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