

The Beginnings of Opus Dei in Ireland Leading to the Establishment of its First Corporate Apostolate, Nullamore University Residence, Dublin in 1954

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Abstract: *A documentary account of some aspects of the beginnings of Opus Dei in Ireland, up to the establishment of its first corporate apostolate, Nullamore University Residence, Dublin. The article covers the years 1947 to 1954 and outlines the life and apostolate of the members of Opus Dei during the period, the first joint annual formational courses between England and Ireland, as well as the first women members (the 'Miracle of Ireland'). The resolution of some ecclesiastical and parental misapprehensions in Dublin is dealt with in some depth. Initial progress and then disappointment with developments in Cork, as well as preparations for the first English edition of The Way published in Cork, are dealt with. Other topics include apostolic visits to Galway, devotion to Isidoro Zorzano, the search for and setting up of a Residence and the official opening of Nullamore. The primary sources are written accounts of the period, diaries of centres, documents from the archives of the Prelature and some secondary works, which provide historical and cultural contexts.*

Keywords: *Josemaría Escrivá – Opus Dei – José Ramón Madurga – Cormac Burke – Nora Burke – Álvaro del Portillo – John Charles McQuaid – Northbrook – Nullamore University Residence – Dublin – Galway – Cork – The Way – Mercier Press – Isidoro Zorzano – 1947-1954*

Gli inizi dell'Opus Dei in Irlanda sino alla fondazione della Residenza Universitaria Nullamore di Dublino nel 1954: *un resoconto documentario di alcuni aspetti degli inizi dell'Opus Dei in Irlanda, fino alla fondazione del*

suo primo apostolato corporativo, Nullamore University Residence, a Dublino. L'articolo copre gli anni dal 1947 al 1954 e descrive la vita e l'apostolato dei membri dell'Opus Dei durante questo periodo, i primi corsi di formazione annuali congiunti tra Inghilterra e Irlanda, e le prime vocazioni di donne irlandesi (il "Miracolo d'Irlanda"). Viene trattata in maniera approfondita la soluzione di alcune incomprensioni con le autorità ecclesiastiche e con i genitori dei primi membri a Dublino. Vengono poi trattati i progressi iniziali e la delusione per gli sviluppi del lavoro apostolico a Cork, e i preparativi per la prima edizione inglese di Cammino pubblicata a Cork. Altri temi sono i viaggi apostolici a Galway, la devozione a Isidoro Zorzano, la ricerca e la fondazione di una residenza per studenti universitari e l'inaugurazione ufficiale di Nullamore. Le fonti primarie sono i racconti scritti dell'epoca, i diari dei centri, i documenti dagli archivi della Prelatura, e alcune opere secondarie che forniscono il contesto storico e culturale di riferimento.

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This article charts the arrival of Opus Dei in Ireland and its early development with particular, though not exclusive, reference to the establishment of Nullamore University Residence, Dublin¹. Nullamore is significant in this context because it was the first apostolic work of Opus Dei in Ireland and it paved the way for future developments. The official opening of the Residence for students in 1954 was the culmination of the persevering efforts of the few, relatively young first members amid setbacks and misunderstandings. While a comprehensive history of the early days of Opus Dei in Ireland would require a more extensive study, it can be seen in this account how

¹ The primary sources are written accounts of the period, diaries of centres, documents from the archives of the Prelature and some secondary works, which provide historical and cultural contexts. The particular sources used in compiling this account were the diaries of the Northbrook (1950-1953) and Nullamore (1953-1954) centres (General Archive of the Prelature of Opus Dei [AGP], serie M.2.2, 299-32/34; 300-1/7) and other documentation held in the General Archive of the Prelature of Opus Dei, Rome; documents from the Diocesan Archives, Archbishop's House, Dublin; recollections of the period by Monsignor Cormac Burke, who wrote an account in 1954 (AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1), 1975 (AGP, serie A.5, 201-1) and also in 1977 which is held in the Regional Commission of the Prelature of Opus Dei, Dublin, together with other written testimonies and local civil and legal documents.

the Work² developed in an organic way, with people getting to know the members and message of Opus Dei, largely through personal friendships, professional contacts and family relationships. It all started and grew from the arrival of just one member of Opus Dei who came to Dublin to pursue post-graduate studies. All of the events recounted here took place during the lifetime of the founder of Opus Dei, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, who followed matters closely from Rome.

THE ARRIVAL OF OPUS DEI IN IRELAND

On 4 October 1947, José Ramón Madurga³, a young Spanish graduate and member of Opus Dei, arrived in Ireland to do a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering in University College Dublin. He came with the blessing of Saint Josemaría Escrivá for starting the Work in Ireland. On his way to Dublin he passed through London on 2 October, where he celebrated the anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei with some members of the Work there. Opus Dei had only just begun in England the year before⁴. Shortly after Madurga arrived in Dublin, he got involved in university life by joining a number of student run sports clubs and societies, such as the Rowing Club, the Literary & Historical Society (a debating society) and the

² Opus Dei (Work of God) is also commonly referred to simply as the Work.

³ Testimony of José Ramón Madurga, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-4: José Ramón Madurga Lacalle was born in Zaragoza (Spain) on 10 November 1922. He studied Engineering in Madrid and Bilbao and in 1940 joined Opus Dei. At the request of St. Josemaría Escrivá he moved to Dublin in 1947 to begin post-graduate studies in Mechanical Engineering and to start Opus Dei in Ireland. Subsequently he worked as an engineer in the Electricity Supply Board, Dublin until 1950, when he moved to Rome. He was ordained a priest in 1951 and went to the United States, where he remained until 1958. He moved to Japan on 8 November 1958 to begin Opus Dei there and was Regional Vicar until 1977. He remained in Japan until his death on 29 June 2002.

⁴ Opus Dei began in England with the arrival in London from Spain of Juan Antonio Galaraga, Eduardo Alastrué and Salvador Peris on Saturday, 28 December 1946. They were joined two years later by José Antonio Sabater and José Luis González-Simancas. They lived in a small rented flat in Rutland Court, Kensington, London SW7, and often used to visit Brompton Oratory to attend Mass. In October 1948 cardinal Griffin granted them permission to set up an oratory and reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the Rutland Court flat. A priest from Brompton Oratory said the first Mass in the small oratory on 26 October that year. From then on one of the Oratorians went each week to celebrate Mass and renew the Blessed Sacrament. In 1951, Fr. José López Navarro came for a period, before moving to Ireland in 1952.

Spanish Society⁵. It was at a meeting of the Spanish Society around 26 October, convened to elect a new Auditor⁶, when he first met Cormac Burke⁷, the out-going Auditor for the previous year. Burke was campaigning for a candidate that he supported for the position. This contact with Madurga would eventually lead to Cormac Burke becoming the first Irish person to join Opus Dei. Madurga was not the first person of the Work that Burke had met. Without realising it, he had met a member of Opus Dei earlier in the year, while attending a six weeks course at the Menéndez Pelayo Summer University in Santander, Spain. At that time Burke was totally unaware of the existence of the Work. Federico Suárez⁸, who was secretary of the course, got to know him and aware of the probable expansion of Opus Dei to Ireland had the foresight to note a few details of a possible future contact there. These details were subsequently passed on to José Ramón Madurga. Suárez noted that Cormac Burke created a good impression, was cheerful and knew some Spanish; that he was from Sligo and was living in a student residence in Dublin. He was unsure whether Burke was a Catholic or not, but presumed he was⁹. Suárez mentioned to Burke that he had some friends who were going to

⁵ A club for students interested in the language and culture of Spain.

⁶ The chairperson or president of college societies is known as the Auditor.

⁷ Cormac Burke was born in Dublin, 21 March 1927. His family home was in Sligo, in the north west of Ireland. His father, Dr. Patrick Burke, was a General Practitioner and his mother's name was Nora. He has two sisters, Marie and Nora, and a brother called Colman. A lecturer in Modern Languages and a doctor in Canon Law, as well as a civil lawyer and member of the Irish Bar, he was ordained a priest of the Opus Dei Prelature in 1955. After thirty years of pastoral and teaching work in Europe, North America and Africa, Pope John Paul II appointed him a Judge of the Roman Rota in 1986. During his 13 years in Rome, he also taught Anthropology at the Studium Rotale, as well as Canon Law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. In 1995 he was Visiting Professor of the Willy Onclin Chair at the Catholic University of Louvain. The National Federation of Catholic Physicians of the United States accorded him the 1994 Linacre Award for his writings in the field of marriage and sexual ethics. Among his best known books are: *Conscience and Freedom*, Sinag-Tala, 1978 (2nd ed. 1992), *Authority and Freedom in the Church*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1988 and *Covenanted Happiness*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1990 (Revised and enlarged edition, Princeton, Scepter Press, 1999). His works have been translated into many languages. Since his retirement from the Rota in 1999, he has lived in Kenya, continuing his pastoral work there in the apostolates of Opus Dei. See also: www.cormacburke.or.ke.

⁸ Federico Suárez Verdaguer (1917-2005) was born in Valencia, Spain. He joined Opus Dei in 1940 and was ordained a priest in 1948. He carried out an extensive apostolate with university students and wrote a number of spiritual books which have been published in various languages.

⁹ Handwritten note by Federico Suárez, AGP, serie M.2.1, 22-4.

Ireland soon and he would like them to meet up. When Madurga and Burke met, they immediately struck up a rapport. As Burke relates:

José Ramón was quite prepared to speak Spanish, which was an advantage, as normally if you met a Spanish student he was rather keen to speak English. He was obviously a very good student, very interested in his profession and in just about everything. After a few weeks he lent me a book that he said had influenced his life very deeply and that would influence mine. I think we began to translate it then already, before I knew anything about the Work. I remember the impression of reading *The Way*¹⁰, without knowing of the existence of Opus Dei, simply reading it without any sensation that there was an organization behind it. It struck me as a fantastic book, written for anyone. I used to walk myself up and down the Phoenix Park¹¹ with *The Way*. *The Way* and myself, praying and just thinking about things¹².

José Ramón Madurga, being the only member of the Work in Ireland, was delighted to receive a telegram from Rome with greetings for his birthday on 10 November from Saint Josemaría Escrivá. The telegram also suggested that he spend Christmas in London, so as not to be alone and also because Father Pedro Casciaro¹³, on behalf of the Father¹⁴, was going to be there with them. This would also be particularly appreciated since as yet there was no priest of Opus Dei in England or Ireland. Before departure Madurga opened up the possibility of vocation with Cormac Burke and left him thinking about the matter. Like many young Irish men leaving school at the time, Burke had considered the possibility of having a vocation to the priesthood, but had discarded it, though not totally. The conversations with Madurga, who emphasized that one could be a saint in the world, added to his doubts and to his general sense of thinking about vocation, and now specifically

¹⁰ *Camino*, published later in English as *The Way*, was first published by St. Josemaría in 1939. See Josemaría ESCRIVÁ, *The Way*, Critical-Historical edition prepared by Pedro Rodríguez, London-New York, Scepter, 2009.

¹¹ The Phoenix Park is a very large park, just west of Dublin city centre.

¹² Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 3.

¹³ Monsignor Pedro Casciaro was born in 1915 in Murcia, Spain. He studied architecture and joined Opus Dei in 1935, while still a student. He accompanied Saint Josemaría during some difficult periods of the Spanish Civil war. He was ordained in 1946 and was Secretary General of Opus Dei for a time. In 1949 he started the Work in Mexico. Having returned to Europe, he was Procurator of Opus Dei from 1958 to 1966 and member of the Regional Commission of Opus Dei in Italy. In the seventies he returned to Mexico, where he died in 1995.

¹⁴ During St. Josemaría's lifetime members referred to the founder with affection as 'Father' or 'the Father,' as the spiritual father of Opus Dei.

vocation to Opus Dei. After Christmas Madurga returned to Dublin along with Father Pedro Casciaro. Although Madurga was keen for Casciaro to meet Cormac Burke, it proved impossible as Burke remained in Sligo during the holiday period. While in Dublin, Casciaro, who was Secretary General of Opus Dei at the time, visited the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. John Charles McQuaid¹⁵. He explained the nature of Opus Dei and the apostolate of its members and informed the Archbishop about Madurga's staying in Dublin.

Once term began, entrusting the matter to the intercession of Venerable Isidoro Zorzano¹⁶, José Ramón Madurga arranged to meet Cormac Burke on Thursday 8 January 1948, saying he wanted to talk to him at length about something important. They met mid-morning and talked all day, all evening and into the night. The following morning they met again, but Burke told him «to leave me in peace this afternoon»¹⁷. In fact Burke went to speak with Father Denis Meehan, a priest friend of his in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, to talk over things with him¹⁸. It turned out that father Meehan had never heard of Opus Dei, but looked up an article on Secular Institutes by Professor William John Conway (later Cardinal and Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland) in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*¹⁹, which José Ramón Madurga had mentioned to Burke. Father Meehan took a positive and supernatural view of the situation and agreed «with the theological argument that if I had a vocation to the priesthood it would emerge (in Opus Dei)». Finding this conversation helpful, he returned to Dublin. That Friday night, Madurga went to see Cormac Burke, who relates: «When he came that night at 7 or 8

¹⁵ The Most Reverend John Charles McQuaid was born in Cootehill, Co Cavan on 18 July 1895. He was ordained priest of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in 1924. He taught at Blackrock College, Dublin, a prestigious secondary school run by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (formerly known as the Holy Ghost Fathers). He was close to Eamon de Valera, a future Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and President of Ireland, himself a former Blackrock College teacher. He reputedly helped de Valera in drafting the modern Irish constitution (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*, 1937). McQuaid was ordained archbishop of Dublin on 27 December 1940 and was very influential in Ireland at the time. He retired in 1971 and died in 1973.

¹⁶ Isidoro Zorzano was one of the first members of Opus Dei. He died in 1943 with a reputation for holiness.

¹⁷ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 5.

¹⁸ Cormac Burke knew Fr. Denis (Dinny) Meehan from his schooldays in Sligo, as he was one of his teachers. After leaving school Burke used to consult him for guidance from time to time. St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, is a pontifical university and principal seminary for the training of priests.

¹⁹ «*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*» (November 1947), pp. 1011-1014.

o'clock, I wrote the letter to the Father (asking for the Admission²⁰). I only later discovered it was the Father's birthday: it was January 9»²¹. It appears that José Ramón Madurga was very keen on sending a telegram to Rome with the news, but although he had it prepared, he did not send it until Sunday. Burke relates jokingly, «He didn't quite trust me and since by Sunday I hadn't backed out, he sent the telegram!»²².

At that time Cormac Burke was living in University Hall, Hatch Street, Dublin, a student residence run by the Jesuit fathers, while José Ramón Madurga was living in digs²³. After a time Madurga suggested that they should find a place to stay together. Some weeks later they rented a furnished flat at 7 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin. The renting agreement was signed on 19 March and afterwards they went out for a meal to celebrate²⁴. Subsequently they took a photograph of themselves standing in front of a mirror, as there was no one else to hold the camera (photograph no. 1). It was a special period for Burke as he relates: «I will always remember the spring we spent in the top flat. It was coming up to exam time and I think that José Ramón was content to work mainly on my formation. He was certainly a wonderful man to have: right through all the years in Dublin I don't remember ever seeing him lose his cheerfulness or stir in his faith. He was a rock in both»²⁵ (photographs nos. 2 & 3). Especially memorable were the many late nights spent talking after supper and before or after the rosary. Very often they would go on until one o'clock in the morning or later! José Ramón Madurga had a fantastic memory and told Cormac Burke many things about the Work, the Father and about people of Opus Dei that he knew. Looking back on the period, Burke comments that what he remembers most in general terms were the letters from Rome: «There was a letter each week from Rome to both of us together. And, in those letters the Father - it was always a complete letter from the Father with some few words from Don Álvaro (del Portillo), or perhaps vice versa. The only three phrases that I remember, the

²⁰ The admission in Opus Dei is usually granted six months after the request to become a member.

²¹ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 6.

²² Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 6.

²³ As a paying guest in a private house.

²⁴ This was the Feast day of St. Joseph, the saint's day of the Founder, St. Josemaría. Saint or name days are celebrated in some places on a par with birthdays. The tenancy agreement was between the landlord and Madurga for the letting of a furnished flat for a period of three months for a rent of £65 (Agreement & Estate Agent documents, Dublin).

²⁵ Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 1, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

three ideas which recurred constantly, either one or two or perhaps the three in every letter were: «*Que os queráis. Que estéis alegres. Que me cumpláis las Normas*»²⁶ (Love one another. Be cheerful. Please do the Norms²⁷).

In the summer of 1948, Cormac Burke went to Spain to attend a summer course of formation for members of the Work, later commonly called an annual course, in a centre in Madrid called La Moncloa. He was pleasantly surprised how much he knew about people there. After knowing just one person of the Work for six months, he was now surrounded by about sixty people, some with very out-going personalities. He was really impressed by the warmth, the family atmosphere, the personalities; the virtues lived with naturalness. It was during this course that he first met the founder, who spent some time with the course participants. It was then that he appreciated another aspect of Opus Dei's spirituality, the simplicity of the people of the Work when with the founder. «Seeing them with the Father, they were just like kids; it was very impressive»²⁸. On 19 August, Cormac Burke was in a centre in the countryside outside of Madrid called Molinoviejo²⁹ and did the admission to the Work in its new oratory, the first to do so. It was done in the presence of Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

In the evening, the Father took me by the arm as we walked across one of the fields, looking at the sun going down. He said several things. I remember clearly and often recall his saying: “El Señor te va a pedir mucho, pero te dará gracias extraordinarias” (Our Lord will ask much of you, but he will give you special graces). Later a group of them had a standing get-together with the Father, who was leaning physically more and more on Cormac's shoulders. Saint Josemaría used to say “I like to lean on my sons and see they don't give way”³⁰.

This was a way of asking for faithfulness and fortitude in vocation in the years to come.

²⁶ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 8.

²⁷ The Norms is a common expression for the normal daily acts of piety of members of Opus Dei such as Mass, rosary, prayer, spiritual reading, etc.

²⁸ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 12.

²⁹ Molinoviejo is a property near Segovia which has been a formational centre of Opus Dei since 1945.

³⁰ Testimony of Cormac Burke, AGP, serie A.5, 201-1.

ACQUISITION OF NUMBER 27 NORTHBROOK ROAD

Cormac Burke did his final examinations in Arts in University College Dublin in September 1948. He got top marks in French and was recommended by his professor for a part-time job as a French teacher in Maynooth, a constituent college of the National University of Ireland. He also got another part-time position as Assistant Lecturer in Spanish in Trinity College Dublin. In due course he also secured some teaching hours in Castleknock College and Rathmines Technical School³¹. Another person of the Work, Salvio Carreiras³² arrived from Spain in November to do a Masters in Engineering in University College Dublin. He was a very welcome addition.

While having the objective of establishing in due course a university student residence, they realised that it would require a wider base of members and co-operators. As a step forward in their current situation, they started looking for a family house and finally in November 1948 they found 27 Northbrook Road, which they rented for £365 a year. Burke notes «We got the house with what little money we had: José Ramón [Madurga] had a very good scholarship, but he was still studying; and I had a combination of not very large salaries»³³. The house was to be their home for the next six years. It had not been decorated for a dozen or more years and was somewhat dusty and decrepit. They set up a visitor's room and then began to refurbish the three storey house starting at the top floor: «We put down some linoleum in the hall. The little room across the hall we furnished with a small, very cheap three piece suite, a small table and a small ivory statue of our Lady»³⁴. This statue was sent by Saint Josemaría with Salvio Carreiras when he was coming to Ireland³⁵. The poverty of beginnings was evident. They lived initially

³¹ Castleknock College is a Vincentian secondary school. The Rathmines Technical Institute later became a constituent college of the third level Dublin Institute of Technology.

³² Salvio Carreiras Arnaud was from Barcelona, Spain. He came to Ireland in November 1948. Following his Masters in Engineering degree in 1950, he worked in a consulting engineering firm in Dublin. He moved to the Electricity Supply Board in 1951, where he worked until his return to Spain in 1953. He died in a car accident on 15 June 1997.

³³ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 15.

³⁴ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 15.

³⁵ Testimony of Salvio Carreiras, 1979, Archive of the Prelature, Dublin: Carreiras relates that he received a blessing from St. Josemaría before leaving Madrid for Ireland and was surprised when he gave him this small marble statue for Ireland which is greatly loved. Later on he found out that the statue had belonged to the Brosa family (Barcelona), who had some nieces and nephews in the Work. The statue was given to the founder by Jorge

without electric light in one of the top floor rooms. Gradually they expanded «bringing the kitchen – an electric ring – with us, as we descended»³⁶. Conditions can be gauged by the nicknames given to the two rooms at the back: Big Siberia and Little Siberia! While they were still living upstairs, Cormac Burke's father visited. His reaction was to be repeated often in the following years – that of convinced pessimism about the possibility of sustaining the finances of the house. But, later he relented and «eventually admitted that our faith has been justified!»³⁷. Little by little the house was furnished, with items and books borrowed from the Burke's home in Sligo. During another early visit, his father surveyed the books in the living room and protested vigorously «They're all mine!». In fact he gave lots more, still protesting! Cormac Burke observed: «The more my parents gave, the more they protested; and the more they gave, the closer they came to the Work». Christmas 1948 was special as they had their first meal in the dining room, cooked by the housekeeper of Father E.F. O'Doherty, who had kindly arranged this. Father O'Doherty, a well-known professor of Logic and Psychology at University College Dublin, knew Madurga and was very supportive. He also said midnight Mass for them in an oratory in Harcourt Street, where he was chaplain. There was no heating there and they felt the cold. Cormac Burke relates: «We all thought of when we would have our own oratory in Dublin. No one could have imagined that it would take another four years! When it finally did come, Our Lord had taught us to appreciate the privilege fully. Waiting, in Dublin, has taught us many things»³⁸. The waiting would be occasioned by some misunderstandings in dealings with Archbishop's House, Dublin, which will be dealt with later.

THE FIRST SUMMER COURSE OF FORMATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The first summer course of formation in Ireland took place in August 1949. It was held in 27 Northbrook Road, which was usually referred to afterwards as just 'Northbrook'. Among those who came from London for

Brosa, a numerary member of the Work. The Brosa family were very happy to know that the statue had gone to Ireland.

³⁶ Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 4, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

³⁷ Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 4, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

³⁸ Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 6, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

the course were Juan Antonio Galarraga, José Luis González Simancas and José Antonio (Max) Sabater; those from Spain included Miguel Ángel Montijano, who was very young at the time (photographs nos. 4, 5 & 6). There was no priest, no oratory and obviously no Blessed Sacrament. After the course, three Spanish students remained for some weeks to improve their English. By this time both José Ramón Madurga and Cormac Burke were working professionally. Madurga had begun working for the Electricity Supply Board and Burke had continued in various part-time teaching positions. In the autumn of 1949 Cormac Burke finished his law degree and would be called to the Bar³⁹ in January 1950. As well as being very busy professionally, their new situations also reduced their natural daily contact with students. So they used ingenuity and any opportunity that presented itself to have contact with students and to tell them about the Work. Between 1948 and 1949 perhaps half a dozen fellows had come close and expressed definite interest in joining. However, within a short time their interest waned.

But in the autumn of 1949 things were about to change, when contact was made with a group of students who had just finished secondary school. Burke had visited Colm O'Sullivan, a friend in the Rathmines area, Dublin. While there he heard a rumpus coming from the house next door where the Gorman family lived. He was told that it was a group of students from Belvedere College⁴⁰ who were celebrating the fact that four of them were going to enter the seminary. He asked O'Sullivan to introduce him to the group, but he was somewhat reluctant to do so. So Burke provided him with an excuse. He let the air out of the tyre of his bicycle and sent O'Sullivan in to ask for the loan of a bicycle pump. Introductions were made and this initial contact eventually led to some of these fellows coming into contact with Northbrook. Around this time a tape recording was received from Rome with a meditation of the founder called *Life of Faith*. José Ramón Madurga borrowed a tape recorder, of which there were few around at the time, and some tapes from the Engineering Department of the university. They listened to the meditation and to the tapes. It was the early days of tape recorders and though the words of the meditation were rather indistinct there was jubilation in hearing the Father speak. Then the idea arose of making a recording and sending it to Rome, with the Belvedere fellows being invited to contrib-

³⁹ The regulatory body for barristers practising law in the Republic of Ireland.

⁴⁰ Belvedere College S.J., founded in 1832, is a prestigious, city centre secondary school for boys.

ute to the tape as a sort of ‘Irish representation’. Dan Cummings and Dick Mulcahy were among the group⁴¹. The excitement of this episode is captured in a few lines of a letter recorded in an *Hoja Informativa*⁴², an early newsletter for members of Opus Dei. The tape was made and sent to Rome⁴³. Saint Josemaría listened to it and said it was a very historical document and should be carefully preserved. Afterwards, as these lads were interested in Spanish, some lessons were arranged. They worked at translating and studying the grammar of *Camino*. Dan Cummings⁴⁴ joined the Work in 1949 and Dick Mulcahy⁴⁵ joined in 1950. After that members began to come steadily.

⁴¹ Testimony of Fr. Dan Cummings, Archive of the Prelature, Dublin: also there were Eddie Guiney and Gerry Gorman.

⁴² The «Hoja Informativa» was an early, rudimentary publication largely in Spanish, consisting of a few stencilled pages in the style of a newsletter, circulated among people of the Work. It usually contained a short article of an ascetical nature, a few words from the founder of Opus Dei and pieces of news of people of the Work and apostolic developments, often quoting portions of letters received by St. Josemaría in Rome. The first «Hoja Informativa» appeared in December 1948. It consisted of seven pages and the first page is reproduced on page 35. Copies of the «Hoja Informativa» are kept in the Regional Commission of the Prelature, Dublin.

⁴³ «Hoja Informativa» 9 (September 1949), pp. 7-8, relate (translation): «We acquired a tape-recorder, which we had for 24 hours. We listened to a lot of tapes, almost all of them twice... What marvels of engineering which have brought the voice of the Father and of our brothers...! The Father has given us the meditation...it’s just incredible to hear him here in Dublin!... Also, we got a blank tape and recorded for the Father a great get-together. Five young chaps that we met yesterday, who just left school, contributed... We’re very excited with it. You will hear mixtures of English, Irish and Spanish, songs sung out of tune with great abandon, as we hadn’t time to prepare anything». «Hemos conseguido un magnetofón, que tuvimos en casa 24 horas. Nos hemos dado un atracón de cintas: hemos oído casi todas dos veces... ¡Viva la ingeniería! que nos ha traído la voz del Padre y de nuestros hermanos... El Padre nos ha dado la meditación..., parecía increíble oírle aquí en Dublín... Además hemos adquirido una cinta virgen e impresionamos ayer tarde para el Padre y para vosotros, una tertulia monstruo. En ella colaboran además cinco chicos que conocimos ayer, muy jóvenes, recién salidos del colegio... Tenemos una ilusión enorme porque oigáis este purpurri de English, Irish and Spanish, todo lleno de canciones desafinadas, cantadas como venían, por las buenas, pues no ha habido tiempo de preparar nada».

⁴⁴ Daniel (Dan) Cummings was born in Belfast, 3 January 1931. The family moved to Dublin in 1940. He joined Opus Dei in September 1949. He went to Rome in 1963 and was ordained priest in 1965. He was the Procurator General of Opus Dei, Rome, from 1966 to 1982, being the last person to hold this position, which became redundant with the erection of Opus Dei as a personal prelature in November 1982. He now lives in Dublin.

⁴⁵ Richard (Dick) Mulcahy was born in Dublin, 20 November 1930. He was the son of Lieutenant-General Patrick A. Mulcahy, Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces (1955-1960) and a nephew of General Richard Mulcahy who had a high profile involvement in the war of independence and the civil war and later on was an Irish Government Minister. After secondary

For Christmas 1949, Father José Orlandis and others came from London to spend some days together and to hold a retreat. This made Christmas different and extra special compared to the previous year, as it was the first time Mass was said in Northbrook Road. Vestments and a chalice had been brought from London and other liturgical items were provided by a Reverend Mother who knew them well and who also presented them with a large Christmas cake⁴⁶.

A SUMMER ADVENTURE IN THE WEST OF IRELAND

The second annual formational course was held in August 1950 and it was memorable, acquiring legendary status. It was held in a remote part of the West of Ireland. Failing to find a suitable house with their meagre budget, they had settled for a house in Tourmakeady, County Mayo, overlooking Lough Mask. The location may have been picturesque, but the conditions were primitive. The house was rather poor and small, so sleeping accommodation was in tents for half of the participants (photographs nos. 7 & 8). The day the house was viewed, the weather was wonderful and being August, it was expected that the weather would continue to be reasonably good. However, in fact it rained heavily for fourteen of the fifteen days of the course! The only sunny day was the 15th August. There were seventeen on the course, from Ireland, England, Spain and Holland. Eight slept in the house and nine in three small tents. Participants included Cormac Burke, Dan Cummings, Dick Mulcahy, José Ramón Madurga, Father José Orlandis⁴⁷, Juan Antonio Galarraga, José Luis Simancas, Jaime Planell, Henry

school, Dick Mulcahy entered the army Cadet School, becoming a commissioned officer with the rank of Lieutenant. He joined Opus Dei in 1950 and retired from the army in 1953 to look after Nullamore University Residence and was the Director of the Residence at its official opening in 1954. He was ordained a priest of Opus Dei in 1959, having completed his theological studies in Rome, where he lived alongside St. Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei. While in Rome he obtained a doctorate in Canon Law at the Angelicum University. He was Counsellor (Regional Vicar) of Opus Dei in Ireland from 1961 to 1975 and was appointed a Monsignor by the Holy See in 2005. He died on 23 April 2009.

⁴⁶ «Hoja Informativa» 11, p. 10.

⁴⁷ José Orlandis Rovira (1918-2010) was born in Mallorca, Spain. He joined Opus Dei in 1939 after attending a retreat given by St. Josemaría Escrivá, with whom he had close contact throughout those early years of the Work. He accompanied St. Josemaría on his first trip to Rome in 1946 and was one of the first faithful of the Work to meet Pope Pius XII. He was ordained in 1949. He had a doctorate in Law from the University of Madrid and in

Cavanna, Carlos (Charlie) Gómez Durán, José María (Chemari) Arana and Luis Recio who had come from Holland (photographs nos. 9 & 10). There was no electricity in the local area, so power was provided by a windmill type generator. One night a storm was so bad that the generator literally took off, with a tremendous whine from the rotating blades. The noise was such that they thought an airplane had crashed! The three tents were blown down and the occupants had to seek shelter in the house, huddled around an Aga cooker in the kitchen trying to dry out⁴⁸. They had to cook for themselves, with different people trying out their culinary skills. There was no oratory, but they had Mass celebrated by Father José Orlandis. Cormac Burke mentions that he took a lot of notes during the talks. In one of these José Ramón Madurga had told them about the occasion in May 1940 when the founder had brought together all the members of the Work at the time for a meditation in the oratory of Jenner, Madrid and commented on the growth that there had been in the following ten years. They were very impressed by this. But, Burke continues, «looking back now, I was even more impressed that all the members of the Work in Ireland, England and some from Spain were together in a really appalling house and a few appalling tents in the West of Ireland. It helps one realise things have come a long way since then»⁴⁹. The course ended as noted at the time: «These two weeks have gone by too fast, but they have helped everyone among other things to have a clearer vision of the Work and its universality»⁵⁰. The locations of subsequent annual courses varied between England and Ireland.

Canon Law from the Lateran University, Rome. He held many academic posts, including Dean of the School of Canon Law and Director of the Institute for History of the Church, University of Navarra, Spain.

⁴⁸ «The tents were frequently drenched by the rain and wind. In general they held up well although occasionally a rapid exit was needed due to 'imminent danger'. One night the sense of alarm was maximum when the wind generator broke loose with enormous speed, producing an infernal noise and showering sparks everywhere. We thought that a plane had made a forced landing in the vicinity...», «Hoja Informativa» 18 (September-October 1950), p. 7, Tourmakeady.

⁴⁹ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁰ «Hoja Informativa» 18 (September-October 1950), p. 8. Original in Spanish: «Muy cortos se nos han hecho estos quince días; pero nos han servido a todos entre muchas cosas para tener una visión más clara de la Obra y de su universalidad».

THE 1951 ANNUAL COURSE TRANSFER FROM DUBLIN TO LONDON

The annual course in 1951 had the unusual distinction of beginning in one country and then transferring to another! It was to be held in Northbrook and in fact everyone had arrived there, including people from England, Spain and Italy. However, very early on Tuesday morning, the first day of the course, Cormac Burke received a telephone call from Madrid indicating that the course should move to Rutland Court, London. This was in deference to the unhappy situation with Archbishop's house, alluded to earlier. While such a move caused the visitors from England and Spain little difficulty, for those from Ireland it was more problematic, especially for the younger ones who had to seek permission and finance from their parents. In addition most had to get travel permits⁵¹. The initial reaction was that there were too many difficulties and that it might result in the younger Irish people of the Work not being able to go to the course in London. Even today, with air travel so common and relatively inexpensive, such an unexpected and sudden move would present difficulties. Burke relates:

It seemed absurd, impossible... We decided to report back all these objections and that night booked a telephone call to Madrid for mid-day the following day, completely convinced that we were going to say that we can go, but that we were going to leave the (younger) Irish fellows behind. By mid-morning we had picked up a little more faith, not very much I would say, but enough to get the younger chaps together and tell them: Look, we've got to go to London, so let's see if everyone goes home and gets leave (permission) and money from their parents to go to London. And, incredibly, by 12 o'clock everyone was back with the leave and the money. So, when we did call (Madrid) it was easy to say, fine, we'll be there⁵².

At the time, most travel between Ireland and England was by boat, from Dun Laoghaire, Dublin to Holyhead, Wales; and from there a six-hour train journey to London. That evening, Dick Mulcahy and José Luis González left by night boat to help make arrangements in Rutland Court. For the others, the journey turned out to be 'epic'. Taking the 9.30 am Thursday morning boat, they should have been in London by evening. However, the boat returning from Holyhead had a mishap and arrived late. After much waiting

⁵¹ The Common Travel Area of Ireland and the United Kingdom was suspended at the beginning of World War II in 1939 and travel restrictions then applied. This continued until 1952 when unrestricted travel between Ireland and England was reinstated.

⁵² Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 72.

and queuing, they departed Dun Laoghaire six hours late: «There were eighteen of us, all loaded down with eggs, mainly eggs, and chickens and biscuits and bread and ham and so on. These were still the post-war days of rationing and food was much scarcer in England than in Ireland»⁵³.

Once the course was under way, the main difference noted over previous years was that of having an oratory. «And, it does make a difference: for some it was the first time in one of our Oratories – Why the Cross of Wood..?⁵⁴. So many things to be explained! So many customs to be learnt and practised, with the joy of knowing that we are learning to do what our first brothers have done from the start and what brothers of ours yet to come will do to the end of time»⁵⁵. The situation was obviously much better than the previous year, though not perfect. «In many small details we had a new chance to live our spirit of poverty in these ‘difficulties’ of the first times. Even in the last few days we found ourselves abandoned by our domestic staff, with the result that all of us were able to try our hand at cooking, cleaning, washing up, etc. Of course, the Londoners and Dubliners were quite experts already in such matters». These were «wonderful weeks of prayer, cheerfulness and work, of fraternity and filiation. Of union, above all of union with each other (and) especially with the Father... Three or four years ago, who would have thought it possible that in 1951, in the capital of such a country, in the heart of the largest city in Europe, God would bring together a ‘handful of men of His Own’ so as to form them in a spirit of Love and of Faithfulness, of courage and sincerity, of apostolate and work? Such has been the reality of this year. And we are still only beginning!»⁵⁶.

Subsequent summer formational courses were held in Netherhall House, London (1952)⁵⁷; Sutton House, Dublin (1953)⁵⁸ and Nullamore, Dublin (1954).

⁵³ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 72.

⁵⁴ St. Josemaría’s devotion to the Cross was also shown in the Cross of Wood there is in all Opus Dei Centres, and which he referred to in point 178 of *The Way*: «When you see a poor wooden Cross, alone, uncared-for, and of no value... and without its Crucified, don’t forget that that Cross is your Cross: the Cross of each day, the hidden Cross, without splendour or consolation..., the Cross which is awaiting the Crucified it lacks: and that Crucified must be you».

⁵⁵ «Hoja Informativa» 28 (September 1951), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁶ «Hoja Informativa» 28 (September 1951), p. 8.

⁵⁷ Participants included Cormac Burke, Juan Antonio Galarraga, Michael Richards, Dick Stork, Javier Ayesta, Joaquin Clavell, Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Rafael Llanos, Miguel Gutiérrez, Javier Cotelo, Fernando Silio. Dick Mulcahy went to a course in Molinoviejo, Spain.

⁵⁸ Testimony of Fr. Dan Cummings, Archive of the Prelature, Dublin. Participants included Cormac Burke, Dan Cummings, Dick Mulcahy, Fr. Juan Antonio Galarraga, Fr. José

THE 'MIRACLE OF IRELAND'

While all this had been going on, there had been surprising and unique developments on another front, namely the joining of the first women members, despite there being no women members or priests of Opus Dei in Ireland to start the apostolate with women. Cormac Burke's sister, Nora Burke⁵⁹, commonly known as 'Teddy', became the first numerary vocation of the women's section and in reality the second numerary to join the Work after her brother. While attending University College Dublin, she stayed in Dominican Hall, St. Stephen's Green, a residence for university students and shared accommodation with Anna Barret and Máire Gibbons. Teddy Burke was 21 years old on 26 May 1949. Shortly after that her parents came to Dublin and the family had lunch together in a restaurant. As the place was quite crowded the family had to split up, so Cormac and his sister found themselves dining alone. As things had worked out, they had scarcely seen each other during the year, so Cormac took the opportunity to speak to his sister at length «in more human than spiritual terms, of the ideals of our apostolate as applied to Ireland»⁶⁰. She was clearly interested and wanted to know more, so they arranged to meet up again in Northbrook to continue talking about the Work. She came and «I spoke to her fully and the effect was complete. She was overwhelmed»⁶¹. The following day Teddy Burke returned, as had been arranged, with her mind made up. She told him she wanted to join

López Navarro, Henry Cavanna, Michael Richards, Andrés Vázquez de Prada, Anchon Ugalde and Richard Alarcon.

⁵⁹ Nora (Teddy) Burke, from Finisklin, Co. Sligo, was born on 26 May 1928. She was educated in the local Ursuline Convent and later studied for an Arts Degree in University College Dublin. While in college she stayed in Dominican Hall, St Stephen's Green, Dublin. Introduced by her brother Cormac, Teddy joined Opus Dei as a numerary on 6 June 1949. Her sister Máire (R.I.P.) later became an associate member of the Work. On completion of her university studies she worked for some time in an insurance company. In 1954 she went to spend a year in the Roman College of Holy Mary, an international centre of studies for women of Opus Dei recently started by St. Josemaría (cfr. María Isabel MONTERO CASADO DE AMEZÚA, *L'avvio del Collegio Romano di Santa Maria*, SetD 7 [2013], pp. 259-320). There she had many occasions to see St. Josemaría Escrivá, whom she had met for the first time in Spain in the summer of 1954. On returning from Rome in 1955 she worked and lived in Crannton, a home economics school that also ran the catering and household management service for Nullamore University Residence, Dartry, Dublin. Later she was a teacher in schools in Ballinrobe and Crossmolina, Co. Mayo. She now lives in Lismullin Hospitality and Services Centre, Navan, Co. Meath.

⁶⁰ Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 7, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

⁶¹ Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 8, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

the Work. The decision was «accompanied by tears»⁶². Realising that there were no women or priests of the Work here to speak with her or look after her formation, Cormac and José Ramón Madurga had been quite perplexed about what to do. «Don't get me involved»⁶³, Madurga joked. In any case they had decided that the two of them shouldn't stop her writing the letter to the Father asking for the admission to the Work. Teddy Burke's recollections of those days adds that she was in her third year in university at the time and it was around the time of her 21st birthday when her brother spoke to her about the Work. He had mentioned that he wanted to give her a special gift for this special birthday and this was to open up the panorama that Opus Dei presented. Anna Barret, who was a close friend of Teddy, recalls going for a long walk with her the day after Cormac had spoken to her. Teddy was very pensive and related some of the things her brother had said to her. Anna realised that Teddy felt God was calling her. Teddy wrote asking to join the Work that day, 6 June 1949, becoming the first female numerary member of Opus Dei in Ireland. The letter was sent to Madrid where the General Council of Opus Dei still resided before transferring to Rome.

Cormac Burke started to look after his sister's initial formation and began to meet her almost every day for an hour or so, talking to her about the Work⁶⁴. His translations of *The Way* helped a lot. Teddy and Máire used to meet in museums which were close to the Dominican Hall. Firstly they met in the National Museum, Kildare Street, then in the Natural History Museum and later in the National Gallery, Merrion Square. The porters in these places became aware of them and assumed they were dating. If Cormac arrived late, the porter would wink and say «she's over there!»⁶⁵. They found this situation somewhat embarrassing and it resulted in the changes of location.

It took some time for a reply to Teddy Burke's letter to arrive, perhaps because of the unusual circumstances, not to mention the international postal system in those days. The reply eventually came a month or so later and it also came with the suggestion that she should go to a course of formation in Spain. That meant getting approval and finance from her parents, and that didn't seem to be easy. So, she went to Sligo and spoke with her parents. Her mother received the news with tears, as she began to consider that she might not see

⁶² Testimony of Cormac Burke, p. 8, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-1.

⁶³ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 20.

⁶⁴ This situation was truly exceptional, given the special circumstances. Spiritual formation of men and women in Opus Dei is always given separately.

⁶⁵ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 20.

any of her children married. But, with a supernatural reaction, of which both siblings were confident, she started to prepare things for her daughter's journey. Their father kept silent and produced the required cheque without protest. Teddy went to the course in Los Rosales, Madrid and returned with a determination not to be the only woman of the Work in Ireland⁶⁶.

During the holiday period, while Teddy was in Spain, she had kept in touch by letter with Anna Barret. Anna felt that her cousin Olive Mulcahy would understand Opus Dei and said to her that she should get to know Teddy Burke. On her return to Ireland Teddy spoke about the Work first with Barret, who listened attentively but kept her counsel. Then on 9 September 1949 Teddy met some friends in a coffee shop on St. Stephen's Green and Máire Gibbons was among them. They had a long and intimate conversation about Opus Dei and what Teddy had been doing in Spain. Gibbons asked her how many members were there in Dublin and Burke replied with naturalness that she was the only one. Immediately, without further ado, Máire Gibbons⁶⁷ said «Well, now there are two of us»⁶⁸. Teddy continued talking with Anna Barret⁶⁹ and gave her translations she had made of some points of

⁶⁶ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁷ Máire Gibbons, or Máire Brighid Nic Giobuin in Irish as she preferred to be called, was born with her twin brother in Dublin on 28 October 1927. Her father was Seamus Gibbons of Louisburg Co. Mayo and her mother, who died when she was eight, was Brighid Curran of Aughavas, Co. Leitrim. The family lived initially in Rathfarnham, but moved to Foxrock after the death of her mother. Her father had worked in the linen industry in Belfast before the War of Independence and subsequently became involved in promoting what were then referred to as cottage industries in the Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) areas. She inherited from her parents a love for the Irish language and for the faith. Her secondary education took place in the Dominican school in Cabra. As the oldest girl in the family, she gradually assumed many of the household responsibilities. On leaving school, she spent a year studying domestic economy before enrolling in 1948 in University College Dublin, where she studied German philology and Irish. Her father was anxious that household tasks should not interfere with her studies and suggested that she live during term time in Dominican Hall, a residence for women students on St. Stephen's Green. She quickly made friends there, among them Nora (Teddy) Burke, with whom she shared long conversations about literature, Irish culture and the shape of the world in the aftermath of World War II. She was the second Irish woman numerary to join the Work. In 1952 she went for a short while to help the beginnings of Opus Dei in England. On returning she worked in Crannton, a domestic science school that also looked after catering and domestic services at Nullamore University Residence. Following a year spent at the Roman College of Holy Mary, she moved to the United States in 1957, where she lived for seventeen years in Chicago, Washington D.C. and Boston. She returned to Ireland in 1974 and died on 20 April 2012.

⁶⁸ Testimony of Olive Mulcahy and Pilar Lázaro Lorente, AGP, serie A.5, 222-1.

⁶⁹ Anna Barrett, the youngest of four children, was born in Darragh, Ennis, County Clare on

The Way. Anna Barret told Teddy on 1 October that she wished to join the Work and wrote asking for admission the following day. So, on 2 October 1949 Teddy, Máire and Anna celebrated the anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei with a meal together in a student restaurant. They had high hopes of Olive Mulcahy having a vocation to the Work. So Barret talked with her on 7 December and gave her some translations of *The Way*. They met again on 16 December in Grafton Street and Mulcahy announced her decision to join. Olive's brother Richard had come to the Work independently, through Cormac Burke, as already mentioned.

30 June 1928. Her father was Frank Barrett, a founder-member of the Fianna Fáil political party, who had been involved in the fight for Irish independence and was a commander in the (old) IRA (Irish Republican Army). Her mother was Delia Costelloe, a National School teacher who taught in Kilmaley, Co. Clare for a time. Anna's sister Máire became an Ursuline nun (Sister Gertrude) and headmistress of the school in Thurles, Co Tipperary. There were two brothers: Frank, who became an accountant and Sylvester, who became a politician and held Ministries in the Irish Government and also was a Member of the European Parliament. In 1931 her father died at the age of 39 years and her mother died three weeks later. Anna was not yet 3 years old. The extended Barrett and Costelloe families took on responsibility for the children and Anna went to live with her mother's sister Mary, who was married to Dan O'Keefe and lived in Tureen, Kilnamona, Co Clare. Having completed her secondary schooling in the Ursuline boarding school, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Anna went on to study an Arts degree in University College Dublin and stayed at Dominican Hall on St Stephen's Green for her university years. She graduated in 1946 in English and French. True to her family background she was always deeply involved in politics while a student: fund-raising, canvassing and organising meetings. Anna became very good friends with Nora (Teddy) Burke while a student living in Dominican Hall and studying the same subjects. Teddy Burke joined Opus Dei on 6 June 1949. Anna Barrett realised what was happening in her close friend's life and reflected calmly on this. Later they moved to live in her uncle's (Fr John Costelloe) house in Rathmines. At one point Anna asked Teddy in the context of joining Opus Dei: "What about me?". Teddy replied: "I thought you weren't interested. When we talked about it you just kept saying 'I see. Yes. I understand.' But that was all!". The next day, 2 October 1949, Anna wrote the letter asking for admission to the Work, becoming the third Irish numerary member of the women's section. Anna completed a Higher Diploma in Education in UCD in 1950, but then went on to work in the International Department of the Insurance Corporation of Ireland, then in Dame Street, Dublin. She resigned from the job in 1953 to help set up Crannton, the Home Management side of Nullamore. She also became Director of Northbrook, on the men vacating it, until 1956 when she went to Rome. Saint Josemaría asked her to go to England as Regional Secretary of the Advisory. She worked at developing apostolates of Opus Dei in London, Manchester and Sussex until 1973, with her accustomed calm but urgent thrust. Anna then returned to Ireland and began teaching English and French full-time in Tallaght Community School, Dublin until her retirement in 1993. She continued for many years to be involved in the ongoing work of formation in the apostolate. Anna Barrett died on 9 November 2018 at 90 years of age and is buried at Temple Kiernan Cemetery, Lismullen, Co. Meath.

An uncle of the Burkes, Father John Costelloe⁷⁰, had a house in Castlewood Park, Dublin and he gave them the use of an upstairs flat, which became for a short while the first centre of the women's section of Opus Dei in Ireland. Eileen Maher, a medical student whom they knew through Dominican Hall, had also struck them as someone who could understand the Work. She was invited for afternoon tea to Castlewood Park, but to their great disappointment she did not turn up. Later, Máire Gibbons met her by chance and had a long conversation with her about vocation to the Work. Shortly afterwards, on 18 March 1950 she asked to join the Work. During 1950 they moved to a basement apartment in Lesson Park, around the corner from Northbrook Road. The apartment began to be known affectionately as 'The Flat'.

Later in the year Rosario Orbezo⁷¹ paid them a visit and her presence had a beneficial effect not only for the women but also for the men. Through Teddy and Cormac Burke acting as intermediaries, various observations and suggestions for 'possible improvement' in dress standards were passed on to the men. In April 1950, Father José María Hernández de Garnica, Central Priest Secretary of Opus Dei⁷², came to Dublin to see and help the women of Opus Dei and also to visit the Archbishop of Dublin. In 1952 Antonieta Gómez⁷³ arrived, sent by Saint Josemaría Escrivá. In a meeting with the founder prior to departure, she avidly took note of points in a copybook. Saint Josemaría then took the copybook and wrote: «In Dublin,

⁷⁰ Fr. Costelloe was a retired parish priest in ill health who was extraordinarily generous towards the needs of the apostolate. Eventually he literally gave everything he had to the Work. In 1951 Cormac and his sister asked him for and were given £1,000 for the Roman College of the Holy Cross, the international centre of studies for formation of Opus Dei members set up by St. Josemaría in Rome. Later an urgent request came for donations for the Roman College. Cormac Burke and his sister approached their uncle again and explained that the situation was really grave, really serious. «Come back tomorrow», Fr. Costelloe told them. When they returned the next day, he brought them to his bank and withdrew everything he had, about £3,250. This money, which was a very significant amount at the time, was sent to Rome.

⁷¹ Rosario Orbezo Goicoechea (1918-2002) was from Bilbao, Spain. She met Opus Dei through her brother in 1946 and was one of the first women members of the Work.

⁷² In the organisational structure of Opus Dei at the time, the Central Priest Secretary helped the President General with regard to the women's section. This is now the Central Vicar Secretary for the Opus Dei Prelature.

⁷³ Antonieta Gómez García-Argüelles (1921-1996) was born in San Sebastián, Spain. She joined the Work in 1946. From 1947 onwards she was involved in the formation of the first assistant numeraries and helped in the development of Opus Dei in Ireland and England.

in Rome, in Madrid as in the middle of Africa: souls!»⁷⁴. He also gave her this advice: «When I ask something of you, my daughter, don't tell me that it is impossible, because I already know that. Indeed, from the beginnings of the Work our Lord has asked many *impossibles* of me...and they keep coming! So, I want you to be like the ducks that take to water: without hesitation, without fear. If God asks something, it has to be done. You have to launch yourself forward fearlessly»⁷⁵.

In referring to the early progress of the Work in Ireland, especially the way the first women members came, Saint Josemaría sometimes spoke about the 'Miracle of Ireland' and that «If all vocations are divine, those of my daughters in Ireland are super-divine»⁷⁶. Burke also remembers a conversation with the founder on 24 June 1952, in Rome, where he said: «When I die and you are speaking to younger members, tell them that I loved Ireland a lot, but above all, speak to them about the 'Miracle of Ireland'»⁷⁷.

ECCLESIASTICAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS DELAYING THE SETTING UP OF A UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE

A difficulty had arisen very early on due to misunderstandings with Archbishop's House, which with time became more complex and more problematic, resulting in a delay in having a properly set up centre with an oratory. As time went on and more members were joining, this situation was increasingly unsatisfactory. As mentioned earlier, in 1947, shortly after José Ramón Madurga arrived in Ireland, Father Pedro Casciaro, Secretary General of Opus Dei at the time, came to Dublin and visited the Archbishop, Dr. John Charles McQuaid. He conveyed greetings on behalf of Monsignor Josemaría Escrivá, the President General, and explained the nature of Opus Dei and the apostolate of its members. He informed the Archbishop about Madurga's staying in Dublin and then spoke about the desire to start a university residence for students in due course⁷⁸. Two days later the Chancellor

⁷⁴ «Crónica», 1979, p. 725, AGP, Biblioteca, P01.

⁷⁵ «Crónica», 1979, p. 729, AGP, Biblioteca, P01.

⁷⁶ Testimony of Palmira Laguens Daroca, AGP, serie A.5, 222-1-4.

⁷⁷ The founder's original words were: «Cuando yo me muera y tú estés hablando a los pequeños de allí, díles que yo quería a Irlanda muchísimo; pero que, sobre todo, hablaba del 'milagro de Irlanda'» (Testimony of Cormac Burke, AGP, serie A.5, 201-1).

⁷⁸ The meeting took place on 31 December 1947.

of the Diocese, Monsignor R.J. Glennon, wrote to Father Casciaro, who was still in Dublin, informing him on behalf of the Archbishop that «the scheme appears to be inopportune and to lack the mature examination which would guarantee success to a venture so novel as is this way of life in Dublin»⁷⁹. Father Casciaro replied courteously to Monsignor Glennon, saying that he would regard as providential the Archbishop's advice and would study with great affection the situation of Catholicism in Ireland before embarking on any major project⁸⁰. In retrospect it appears the Archbishop had misunderstood the situation and thought the residence would be for sixty or seventy Spanish rather than Irish students.

Canon Herbert McKernan was a chaplain at University College Dublin at the time. He relates that José Ramón Madurga came to see him after he arrived in Dublin and explained the apostolate he proposed to do. He recalls asking Madurga what authorization he had. Madurga replied that Opus Dei was approved by Pope Pius XII, and that he had been to see the Apostolic Nuncio. Father McKernan, as he then was, told José Ramón Madurga that he didn't see any future for Opus Dei in Ireland as the Irish were essentially a conservative Catholic people. «How wrong I was!» he commented years later. Nevertheless, he was very impressed by this well-dressed young man going to start his apostolate in the Engineering School, which he thought would not be the most rewarding place to begin. Shortly after this Father McKernan got a letter from the Archbishop saying that he was aware that there was a member of Opus Dei in University College Dublin and asked what permission he had to do apostolate there. «I replied saying that he had the permission of Pope Pius XII and the Apostolic Nuncio. I didn't hear any more from the Archbishop, so I assumed he was satisfied with my reply»⁸¹.

In March, Saint Josemaría wrote to the Archbishop in English⁸², thanking him for his kindness to Father Casciaro who had visited him and went on to say that having given the matter a «great deal of thought», he had come to the conclusion that there must have been a failure «to explain adequately the idea I had in mind». He outlined the personal apostolate of members

⁷⁹ Letter, 2 January 1948, Dublin Diocesan Archive, XX1/95/2.

⁸⁰ Letter, 7 January 1948, Dublin Diocesan Archive, XX1/95/4.

⁸¹ This information is based on a written account, kept in the Regional Commission of the Prelature, Dublin, by Rev. Thomas J. McGovern of a conversation with Canon Herbert J. McKernan on 4 November 1983, who was chaplain to University College Dublin from 1941 to 1953.

⁸² Letter, 11 March 1948, Dublin Diocesan Archive, XX1/95/4.

and mentioned the desirability of having a centre for acts of piety and «the proper functioning of the group as a whole». There was no question of setting up a base for a group from abroad, as the centre would be for «a tiny group of laymen whose Irish colleagues would soon make their continued stay in Ireland superfluous». He then expressed his apostolic hopes:

We just want to sow a little new seed in Ireland because we know that there, more than anywhere else in the world, the Lord has prepared the ground for the advent of the Layman into the fullest cooperation with the Clergy. We also feel that, by going to Ireland, with Your Grace's kind permission, we shall be doing something very dear to the heart of the Holy Father, who has given us so much encouragement in our field of endeavour⁸³.

This letter was acknowledged verbally by the Chancellor, but no reply was received.

It is interesting to note that at this time there was in fact a grave need for university student hostels. A newspaper article at the time stated that the establishment of hostels to relieve the appalling conditions under which university students had to live, particularly in Dublin, would be welcomed wholeheartedly by the university authorities. It went on to say that Professor M. Tierney, President of the university, welcomed the Archbishop of Cashel's suggestion that the Past Pupils' Unions of second level colleges should combine to establish hostels for university students:

The whole question of accommodation for students is a cause of grave anxiety to the authorities of University College Dublin. The problem is not a new one... and the need was aggravated during and since the war.

It was not an easy problem to house more than 1,200 students and so far there was only one hostel for men, which was under the care of the Jesuit fathers. The College itself could not provide the necessary hostels because they had not the funds.

[...] It was a strange anomaly and quaint paradox that the students of John Henry Cardinal Newman's University should be victims of such appalling circumstances when one remembers his ideals as expressed in "The Idea of a University"⁸⁴.

⁸³ Letter, 11 March 1948, Dublin Diocesan Archive, XX1/95/4.

⁸⁴ «The Standard», 18 June 1948. Note that Newman's University later became University College Dublin.

In March 1949, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, then Procurator General of Opus Dei, sent a letter of congratulations to the Archbishop on the occasion of his receiving an honorary doctorate, in the course of which he mentioned delicately the outstanding reply to the above letter. While there were some informal contacts with Monsignor Glennon, no official response was forthcoming. Then in April 1950, Father José María Hernández de Garnica, Central Priest Secretary of Opus Dei, came to Dublin to see the Archbishop, but first he called on the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Ettore Felici⁸⁵, who knew the founder of Opus Dei personally and had a great affection for Opus Dei. The following day he met Dr. McQuaid and asked for permission for an oratory for a house where some members were living. The Archbishop voiced various concerns: he was not keen on another institution coming into the Diocese and he had already refused some other Spanish priests; he also found it difficult to see the need for Opus Dei in the Diocese given the general level of piety of the faithful. Effectively permission was not given. The Nuncio had asked Father Garnica to call on him after meeting the Archbishop and this he did the following day. Felici then said that he himself would have a chat with McQuaid to help explain the situation, which he did that same day. This had unfortunate results because his intervention was misinterpreted, as was made patently clear in a telephone call by the Chancellor to Father Garnica on 2 May 1950.

There was happy news in August 1950, with newspaper reports of a further canonical approval of Opus Dei⁸⁶. Along with a news item, *The Standard*, a national Catholic newspaper, carried an extensive editorial on Opus Dei as «The Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has in this Holy Year, crowned the canonical status of *Opus Dei* by granting it the decree of final approbation». The article concluded «as a consequence of this last canonical step, renewed graces of sanctity and fruitfulness which will enable it to go to the many countries that urgently and ceaselessly demand its presence and its work. We are happy to say that its ideals are not unknown in Ireland, and to express the hope that its membership will increase here and draw strength from the spiritual reserves which we, however unworthily, inherit from our forebears»⁸⁷.

⁸⁵ Monsignor Ettore Felici, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, 2 September 1949 to 9 May 1951 (R.I.P.).

⁸⁶ For further details on this approval see Amadeo DE FUENMAYOR – Valentín GÓMEZ-IGLESIAS – José Luis ILLANES, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei. The History and Defense of a Charism*, Princeton-New Jersey, Scepter Publishers, 1994, pp. 221-280.

⁸⁷ «The Standard», 25 August 1950, editorial and news item page 3. This publication changed

Nevertheless, the situation with Archbishop's House dragged on unchanged and a year later the founder wrote in another letter of encouragement:

Be glad –when one follows Jesus Christ, one always has to expect some blessed obstacle. And that one over there is really quite small. Be faithful, and the cloud will soon pass. How much and how good is all that we are expecting from that most beloved Ireland, for the service of our Mother the Church and the extension of the kingdom of Jesus Christ!⁸⁸

COMPLICATIONS WITH AN INFLUENTIAL FAMILY AND A PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOL

Some misunderstandings did occur with a small number of families. In particular, the Mulcahy family situation stands out because of the high level repercussions it generated. At the time Colonel Patrick Mulcahy, father of Richard and Olive, was about to become Lieutenant General and Chief of Staff of the Army. His brother Risteard (Richard) was Minister for Education in the Irish Government at the time and a very influential politician⁸⁹. The Colonel was delighted that his son Richard (Dick) was pursuing a career in the army cadet training college. He was not too concerned about his daughter's vocation, but things were different when it came to his son. Just when he thought everything was going as he wished, he discovered that his son was in some "religious organization!" which he did not fully understand. Being of a military mind-set, he decided to consult the 'superior officer' and went to Archbishop's House. As it happened, the Archbishop was away and he was received by his secretary, Monsignor Richard Glennon, who told him the Archbishop would write to him. Then a meeting was arranged for him with Cormac Burke in March 1951. The diarist of Northbrook has an entry for Monday 19 March: «Cormac visited Col. Mulcahy (in his home) this afternoon to have a chat

its name to the Catholic Standard in 1963 and ceased publication in 1978.

⁸⁸ Letter from Saint Josemaría, 23 April 1951, AGP, serie A.3.4, 263-1.

⁸⁹ Richard (Risteard) Mulcahy (1886-1971) fought in the 1916 Rising and served as Chief of Staff of the Irish Republican Army during the War of Independence and became commander of the pro-treaty forces in the Irish Civil War after the death of Michael Collins. Subsequently he was leader of the Fine Gael political party (1944-1959) and held a variety of cabinet ministries. He was Minister for Education during the periods 1948-1951 and 1954-1957.

with him about a letter which he has received from the Archbishop. A friendly interview even though the matter was delicate. He will end up by being a great friend of ours»⁹⁰. This entry was typical of the sober, non-judgemental and positive tone of diaries of the period, reflecting as well Burke's perspective and discretion in relating these happenings. In actual fact, it had been a fairly one-sided affair, with the Colonel dominating the conversation («throwing bombs», relates Cormac, while he was trying to explain matters without getting much of a hearing). However, he found himself somewhat isolated in his views, 'surrounded on all sides' as Burke comments by his daughter, his son and his wife. Mrs. Mulcahy, who was very positive about her children's vocation, kept coming in and out with tea and cake and queries if 'they needed anything else'. Eventually the General shouted, «You're a fifth columnist. You're with them!». Just the previous Wednesday, Mrs. Mulcahy had visited Northbrook. The diary mentions that Dick Mulcahy's sister had spoken to the family about her going to an annual course in Los Rosales and that «the mother took things very well and the father very badly. ... She seems really enthusiastic about the Work and left in a very happy mood»⁹¹.

Later on Colonel Mulcahy would change his mind completely and in fact claim to be «their greatest supporter»⁹². However, as things stood in 1950

⁹⁰ Diary Northbrook, 19 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

⁹¹ Diary Northbrook, 14 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

⁹² As time went on, Colonel Mulcahy changed his mind. That things were improving by 1953 was seen in the way he took the news that his son was going to resign from the army. The diary of Northbrook relates on Monday, 27 July: «Dick was at his parents' home for tea and spoke with his father about going to Rome to study for the priesthood. Dick told us in the get-together that his father reacted very well and was pleased that the Father had had the good taste and consideration to get Dick to ask for his parent's blessing before taking any steps". In time, there would be a complete turn-around, as evidenced in a later visit the Colonel and Mrs. Mulcahy paid to Cormac Burke and other members of the Work. Reminiscing, he joked about the 'mutiny within his own household' and said "I thought then you were wrong, and I was determined to drive you out of the country. But, now that I know you're in the right, I'll be your biggest supporter» (Testimony Cormac of Burke, Dublin, 1977). Six years later Dick Mulcahy became the second Irish man to be ordained. He celebrated his first solemn Mass on 15 August 1959, the day that St. Josemaría arrived in Ireland for a short visit. Shortly afterwards General and Mrs. Mulcahy met the founder of Opus Dei in Ely University Centre, Dublin. Fr. Mulcahy described the meeting as follows: «The Father greeted my mother and gave my father a big *abrazo* (embrace). My father vigorously expressed his delight in meeting the Father and only regretted that he was not able to speak with him in his own tongue. Both enjoyed themselves very much and the atmosphere was very warm and cheerful. Then the Father suggested taking a photograph and we stood out on the steps at the entrance of Ely (photograph no. 15). After we received

the situation was difficult and his complaint to the Archbishop remained. Also, feedback from friends of members of the Work indicated that the stance of the Archbishop was known in political and public circles, giving rise to comments. Saint Josemaría alluded to difficulties in a letter he wrote to the women members of Opus Dei in Dublin in June 1950:

I really appreciate your letters; I always read them with great joy. [...] I heard about the little setback you had. You can't imagine how happy I was, to think that the Lord is – finally! – allowing you to start suffering a little for your vocation⁹³.

Some other incidents occurred that did not help matters. The Rector of Belvedere College S.J.⁹⁴, a prestigious secondary school in Dublin, spoke negatively at meetings with mothers about an organization in Northbrook Road. Among other things, he warned them that it was asking boys to join and forbidding them to tell their parents. Cormac Burke, by now a member of the Irish Bar as well as a university lecturer, visited the Provincial of the Jesuit Order⁹⁵, who said he was unaware of this, but would look into it. As arranged, Burke returned to see him the following week and was told that the Rector had said these things in his private capacity. Burke did not see how the Rector of a school addressing parents' meetings could be regarded as such. The Provincial, however, maintained that the matter was outside of his competence. The following day Cormac Burke wrote to the Provincial to reaffirm what he had said:

May I take the opportunity of repeating here the essential points which I wished to emphasise yesterday: As I told you, the boys who come to this house, and who are not members of the Opus Dei (the great majority of those who come here), are never asked or advised not to tell their parents of their coming. I can hardly credit that anyone could believe that we should give them such advice. Even if we wished to keep their coming a "secret", such advice would clearly be useless and would only serve – understandably – to make the boys suspicious of us.

The members of the Work and those who have applied for admission are always free to speak to their parents of the Opus Dei and of their feeling in

the blessing of the Father, we left. I have rarely seen my parents so moved. My father complained that he should have been better prepared for such a meeting with the Father!» (Diary Northbrook, 27 July 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-3.

⁹³ Letter, June 1950, AGP, serie A.3.4, 262-1.

⁹⁴ Rev. Denis P. Kennedy, S.J.

⁹⁵ Rev. Thomas Byrne, S.J.

its regard. (Incidentally, at the moment all of our members and candidates for membership here in Dublin have spoken to their parents of the Work and of their intentions).

[...] These, then, are the facts. Now it seems clear that, from what Father Kennedy said, certain of the parents drew an impression completely at variance with them. As long as this impression is left uncorrected, a serious injustice is being permitted. That, in short, is how we see the whole affair⁹⁶.

So, Cormac Burke had visited the Provincial of the Order, but effectively to no avail. It was not only ecclesiastical personages who had some questions on their mind about what was going on in Northbrook Road. Over lunch one day with a senior professional friend, one of the members of Opus Dei was told that the house was under police suspicion for some time as a possible Communist centre!⁹⁷

LIFE AND APOSTOLATE DURING THE DIFFICULTIES

The situation in Dublin vis-à-vis the Archbishop, and the growing public awareness of this, was a continual and unfortunate complication. However, for the most part, it appears to have had little impact on the daily life and apostolic zeal of the people of the Work, with the exception of the delay in having an oratory. This desire was referred to frequently in letters written during those years: «What we truly need is an oratory. It would be really stupendous to have our Lord in the house all the time, present in the tabernacle. And to be able to go to the oratory to kneel before him and speak to him and ask things of him and consult him on everything we need. I am really anxious to see the oratory become a reality» (Letter, Dublin, 22 October 1949)⁹⁸. After visiting the centre of Opus Dei in London, a letter relates:

It was nice to see our London house again after a year and a half! The big change, of course, is the presence of the oratory. It is very fine and the experience of these few days – the first time that I lived in a small house with an oratory – has helped me to ask much more intensely that we may soon

⁹⁶ Letter, 17 November 1951 from Cormac Burke to Very Rev. Thomas Byrne, S.J., Provincial, Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin.

⁹⁷ Diary Northbrook, 12 February 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

⁹⁸ «Hoja Informativa» 9 (September 1949), p. 9.

have our Lord staying with us permanently in Dublin (London, January 1950)⁹⁹.

Cormac Burke bore the main brunt of dealing with the difficulties and misunderstandings. While the diaries of Northbrook mention the various meetings with Monsignor Glennon, Chancellor of the Dublin Diocese, the entries are brief and optimistic. For example: «Cormac visits Mgr. Glennon again. This time they have a more friendly talk. Things look very promising. In fact, with a little faith, we may see things wonderfully settled soon in Dublin. ¡Antes, Más, Mejor!»¹⁰⁰. And, «Cormac visits Mons Glennon this morning and they continue their friendly talks. We expect the Father to write from Rome soon and are keeping the matter much in mind»¹⁰¹.

Daily life went on as usual, with people studying for examinations or working professionally, talking to their friends about the Work, inviting them to Northbrook, doing a few minutes of prayer with them, going on hikes or celebrating major feast days by buying a new gramophone record for playing at get-togethers. However, financial concerns and shortages feature regularly, as do the practicalities of catering, often self-catering, housekeeping and refurbishments. They enjoyed and looked forward very much to news from Rome and to the arrival of the *Hoja Informativa*, a newsletter, with news from other countries. The diary mentions the arrival of one in March 1951 which is «Filled with news that is hot stuff – at least in its effect on us. How wonderful it is to be a brother to those brothers!»¹⁰². The diary also mentions the visit of Dr. Vincent Hanley, the Bishop of Elphin, the diocese where Sligo is. He had been a teacher and Cormac Burke was one of his pupils. They became good friends afterwards. On Burke's invitation, Dr. Hanley visited Northbrook on 24 March 1951 and spent quite some time with the members of the Work there. Before leaving he was asked for his blessing, which he gave wholeheartedly and joked «You now have the blessing of at least one Irish

⁹⁹ «Hoja Informativa» 12 (January 1950), p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Diary Northbrook, 24 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32. ¡Antes, Más, Mejor! refers to a saying of St. Josemaría regarding confidence in God, articulated in point 284 of the book *Forge*: «God solved everything sooner, more fully and better than you expected».

¹⁰¹ Diary Northbrook, 6 May 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹⁰² Diary Northbrook, 3 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32

bishop!». The diary concludes: «Dr. Hanley would like very much to have us in his diocese. But that will take some time yet»¹⁰³.

An insight into the desires and universal outlook of the members of the Work can be seen in the intentions prayed for during a May pilgrimage in 1951. The diary relates: «We have many things to commend on this pilgrimage. All the things that are developing here. Vocations. The Father's intentions. The new priests – millions of things»¹⁰⁴. And, as an indicator of a vibrant apostolate, on returning to Northbrook, it relates: «A record crowd here tonight... a wonderful night!»¹⁰⁵. José Ramón Madurga, who had already completed his ecclesiastical studies, then went to Spain to prepare for his ordination to the priesthood on 1 July. On that day the Northbrook diary relates: «Feast of Precious Blood. A big day for the Work. We spent it very close to the Father and to the twenty who were ordained in Madrid this morning. Especially we thought of Joe (José Ramón). We listened to the Spanish radio tonight in the hope of hearing some report of the event... We all did the prayer afterwards. Then a quiet evening to ourselves chatting and playing records. And thinking of the even bigger steps forward which our “Beautiful mother” (The Work) is taking»¹⁰⁶.

Keeness to have an oratory with the Blessed Sacrament was a constant preoccupation. While awaiting the resolution of the misunderstandings, preparations were made for setting up an oratory when this would be possible, by ordering some liturgical items from abroad. These arrived eventually by sea, with the diary of Northbrook noting:

Cormac [Burke] spent the morning at the North Wall (port) where we had been informed the Oratory had just arrived from Barcelona via Liverpool. After much negotiation he manages to get it all cleared and brought most of it home in the car. For the moment we do not intend to unpack it. Cormac saw the retable (Reredos) during the Customs examination and reports that it is magnificent¹⁰⁷. It will add to our impatience, these months

¹⁰³ Diary Northbrook, 24 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹⁰⁴ Diary Northbrook, 6 May 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹⁰⁵ The pilgrimage was made on 6 May 1951 to Our Lady of the Wayside, Stepside, Dublin. Those on it included Cormac Burke, José Ramón Madurga, Dan Cummings, Dick Mulcahy and Salvio Carreras.

¹⁰⁶ Diary Northbrook, 1 July 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹⁰⁷ This was a painting of Our Lady sent by St. Josemaría and which is now in the oratory of Ros Geal University Residence, Galway.

with our Oratory so near and yet so far. What a help it would be. But it will mean an even bigger 'reception' for Our Lord when he finally does come¹⁰⁸.

VISITS TO CORK AND THE FIRST ENGLISH EDITION OF *THE WAY*

It should also be noted that, few as the members of Opus Dei were at the time, visits were made to see the bishops of Galway and Cork & Ross, with a view to starting residences there in due course. The bishop of Cork & Ross Dr. Daniel Cohalan¹⁰⁹ was very elderly at the time and Dr. Cornelius Lucey, a lecturer in Maynooth, was appointed co-adjutor with the right of succession. Cormac Burke had been teaching for three years in Maynooth and knew Lucey personally. Dr. Lucey was consecrated bishop by Dr. Cohalan in Maynooth on 14 January 1951. There were only two lay guests present: the President of Ireland, Sean T. O'Kelly and Cormac Burke. The day ended with Dr. Lucey saying to Burke that he hoped to see him in Cork soon¹¹⁰. In fact Burke met both bishops in Cork on Monday 29 January and was pleased with the meeting. He telephoned Northbrook to say that he hoped to have definite news on Wednesday, when he was due to meet Dr. Lucey again. The diary entry of Northbrook for Wednesday relates: «Cormac rings with the wonderful news that the Bishops have said 'yes' ... he has been making investigations and prospects seem tremendous. It seems as if a Residence is what Cork has been waiting for over the years»¹¹¹. At the beginning of March official documents that accompany an application for a bishop's *venia* (permission) were received from Rome for presenting to Dr. Cohalan. When Burke presented these, there was mention of a delay, as the diary of 5 March relates: «In Cork Cormac sees the Bishops and hands over the documents. News not so good in one way: They are going to take some time apparently before replying. May even want to consult the Chapter»¹¹². A week later the diary notes: «A letter from Dr. Lucey this morning to say that so far he has heard nothing from the Bishop of our application – but we needn't worry over this, etc. Doesn't sound so good, but however, faith...». Burke maintained contact with Lucey and on his advice met Dr. Cohalan again on 5 May, «with

¹⁰⁸ Diary Northbrook, 7 June 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Cohalan was Bishop of Cork from 1916 until his death in 1952.

¹¹⁰ Diary Northbrook, 14 January 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹¹¹ Diary Northbrook, 31 January 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹¹² Diary Northbrook, 5 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

no concrete result»¹¹³ and so matters remained. The delay was evidently due to some change of attitude. The Nuncio mentioned to Burke and Madurga at the time that he felt the delay was due to «an exchange of views» among the bishops¹¹⁴. The views of Archbishop Jeremiah Kinane¹¹⁵ of Cashel & Emily Diocese, the Metropolitan of the See of Munster, which includes the Diocese of Cork & Ross would have been particularly influential, not to mention the unhappy attitude of the Archbishop of Dublin. In correspondence which has recently become available between Archbishop Kinane and Dr. McQuaid, Archbishop Kinane expressed strong, negative views regarding the matter¹¹⁶. In any event, at the time, it appeared that while matters remained unresolved in Dublin, nothing would happen in Cork.

Making use of the trips to Cork, Cormac Burke met with Captain Feehan¹¹⁷, a publisher, regarding *The Way*. The diary of Northbrook for 1 February 1951 relates: «In Cork Cormac sees Captain Feehan, owner of Mercier Press and speaks to him of the Work. He already knows of it – through Father Boylan¹¹⁸ – and is tremendously enthusiastic. As regards ‘The Way’ he promises to take it immediately and to give it priority over everything else! The Lord has certainly made this a week of ‘breaks’!»¹¹⁹. The latter referred to the verbal ‘go-ahead’ received earlier in the week from the Cork bishops. There are many diary entries indicating that Burke, among all the other demands, spent a lot of time working on the translation of *The Way*. On 14 March it notes: «Cormac is correcting ‘*The Way*’ (the ‘Interminable’ Way)».

¹¹³ Diary Northbrook, 5 May 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹¹⁴ 27 May 1951, account of José Ramón Madurga.

¹¹⁵ Dr. Jeremiah Kinane (1884-1959), Metropolitan Archbishop of Cashel & Emily, was a Principal Co-Consecrator of bishop Cornelius Lucey in January 1951. He was Professor of Canon Law at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth (1911-1933); Bishop of Waterford (1933-1942) and Metropolitan Archbishop of Cashel & Emily (1946-1959).

¹¹⁶ Archbishop Jeremiah Kinane replied to a letter of Dr. McQuaid on 1 June 1950 concerning Opus Dei and concluded: «From what you have told me about ‘Opus Dei’, it is in my opinion unsuited in this country, and would in time be detrimental to religion and a source of serious trouble to a Bishop» (Letter, Dublin Diocesan Archive, XV/C209).

¹¹⁷ Captain John M. Feehan founded the Cork-based publishing house Mercier Press in 1944 and served as its managing director. In 1946 he published *This Tremendous Lover* by Dom Eugene Boylan which sold over a million copies.

¹¹⁸ Dom Eugene Boylan, O.C.R. (1904-1964) was an Irish-born Cistercian monk and spiritual writer. He published a number of books, including *This Tremendous Lover* and *Difficulties in Mental Prayer*, which became international bestsellers and were translated into many languages. In 1962 he was elected the fourth abbot of Mount St. Joseph Abbey in Roscrea, Ireland.

¹¹⁹ Diary Northbrook, 1 February 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

Translating it was a struggle, not only as regards time and effort, but also getting an agreed translation. There was correspondence on this with Scepter in Chicago, who were simultaneously working on publishing in English *The Holy Rosary* of Saint Josemaría Escrivá¹²⁰. The diary entry for 20 March includes: «A letter from Chicago this morning with more corrections for *The Way*»¹²¹. In early September, another entry states «Cormac works at ‘final’ touches on *The Way*»¹²². However, a further two years elapsed before actual publication. The diary announced on 31 July 1953 that: «the galley-proofs which when corrected are the definitive book, were finished this morning by Cormac with the help of Father Joe»¹²³. It continued, commenting on one of the translation issues, «The big news is that the chapter on Proselytism, which word no one liked, has been changed to ‘Winning New Apostles’ which has the great virtue of having none but the literal meaning»¹²⁴. In Ireland the word could be misinterpreted due to historical circumstances¹²⁵.

¹²⁰ *The Holy Rosary* would eventually be published in English in 1953 by Scepter Publishers, Chicago. A Northbrook diary entry for 6 May 1953 recounts: «News from Rome to-day in the shape of a letter. ‘The Holy Rosary’ has been published in Chicago. They received a copy in Rome and Don Álvaro [del Portillo] said we should get one from America as soon as possible. (The letter) says it is typically American – words like ‘neighbor’ and ‘sepulcher’ (spelt neighbour & sepulchre in Ireland and England) – even the wrapper, made by ‘Jiffy’, bears the mark of New World efficiency. We are looking forward very much to receiving this the first book of the Father’s published in English – rather in American» (AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34).

¹²¹ Diary Northbrook, 20 March 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹²² Diary Northbrook, 4 September 1951, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-32.

¹²³ Fr. Joe was Fr. José López Navarro who was born in Valencia, Spain in 1922. A medical doctor, he joined Opus Dei in 1942 and was ordained in 1946. He moved to Ireland in 1952 and was Regional Vicar until 1961, when he returned to Spain. He died 16 July 1982.

¹²⁴ Diary Northbrook, 31 July 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹²⁵ The word “proselytism” in Ireland was associated almost entirely with the undermining of the faith of Roman Catholics. This is made clear in the statement from the Irish Hierarchy following their June meeting in Maynooth in 1925: «We are of the opinion that the Catholic public generally are not aware of the extent to which proselytism is carried on in this country, especially in large centres such as Dublin. It is no exaggeration to say that within recent years thousands of children, born of Catholic parents, have been robbed of their inheritance, the faith, owing to the nefarious activities of the proselytisers, who, well equipped with funds, seek their victims among the poor and the fallen...». A brief historical review is helpful to understand why this was so in a mainly Catholic country. From the thirteenth century Ireland was under English rule and totally Catholic. This situation changed radically in the reign of King Henry VIII of England, when he separated the church in England from Rome. The Acts of Supremacy abolished papal authority completely and made the King Supreme Head of the Church of England (1534) and of Ireland (1536). In England, the state, church and the majority of people became Protestant. In Ire-

In November, the first English edition of *The Way* was published by Mercier Press, Cork, with the *nihil obstat* from Dr. Vincent Hanley, Bishop of Elphin, the Diocese to which the translator belonged. The foreword was written by Dom Eugene Boylan.

VISITS TO GALWAY AND THE FIRST VOCATIONS THERE

José Ramón Madurga and Cormac Burke visited Bishop Michael Browne in Galway in the summer of 1950. He received them very well and expressed genuine interest. At the time, however, there was more interest in starting in Cork. Nevertheless, visits to Galway commenced which turned out to be relatively frequent. No less than three visits are recorded during July, the first generating much enthusiasm: «Last weekend we paid our first flying-visit to Galway. It was a quick journey – by car – a cheap one with a bit of holiday flavour to it, for we brought a tent with us and spent Saturday night camped on the edge of the Atlantic. We went without knowing anyone at all there, and as the university year had ended prospects did not look so bright. However right from the start, it was clear that God wanted to send things our way. After inspecting the university – which is small but rather fine – we came across a University Club and in it a group of first year students of very promising appearance. No time was lost in making ourselves known and after lunch they turned up again». Two of the students joined them on an excursion to Connemara «and so the Work has started in the West»¹²⁶.

Providence strengthened contact with the West, when the newly commissioned Lieutenant Dick Mulcahy was posted to Renmore Barracks, Galway in December 1951. The presence of a person of the Work in Galway was

land, church and state adopted the Reformation, but the majority of the people remained resolutely Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church was outlawed and persecuted with varying degrees of intensity over the following centuries. Thus the rulers and landowners of Ireland were largely Protestant, while the native population remained mainly Catholic and were excluded from political and social life. Catholic emancipation was finally achieved in 1829. An insurrection in 1916 eventually led to Ireland's obtaining a degree of independence through an Anglo-Irish treaty in 1922 and later the creation of the Republic in 1949. Although a minority, the Protestant population still had considerable influence and often with zeal were 'proselytising' Catholics. Sean JOSEPH CONNOLLY (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Irish History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 79 (Catholic emancipation), 462 (Penal laws), 501-502 (Reformation).

¹²⁶ «Hoja Informativa» 17 (August 1950), article headed *Proselitismo*, held in the AGP.

to prove fruitful and would result in vocations and later the setting up of Gort Ard University Residence in 1957. For his formational activities, Dick Mulcahy made periodic trips to Northbrook, with occasional visits being made to Galway by Henry Cavanna¹²⁷, Cormac Burke, Salvio Carreiras and other members. Mulcahy did a wide ranging apostolate with army colleagues and students he became acquainted with through sport or swimming in the sea – a favourite activity. From time to time he arranged for them to meet people of the Work from Dublin on their visits. The diary of Northbrook relates the return of Carreiras from such a visit: «Salvio arrived home from Galway today in wonderful form. He says that there is a great bunch of lads in Galway and that we will have to go there soon! He was the only guest in the hotel – it must have been surprising for the hotel owners to see what a large number of visitors their single guest had»¹²⁸. After a rugby match one day, Dick Mulcahy met Oliver Powell¹²⁹, who would join the Work later that year on 8 September 1953. Other vocations followed, including Desmond Sweeney, Walter Macken and Kevin O’Byrne. Subsequently Desmond Sweeney¹³⁰ went to help develop Opus Dei in Holland and similarly Kevin O’Byrne¹³¹ went to Kenya. Oliver Powell and Walter Macken were later ordained priests of Opus Dei.

¹²⁷ Henry Cavanna was born in Madrid on December 22, 1925. He studied law in Complutense University, Madrid and moved to Ireland in 1950. While in Ireland he completed his doctoral thesis for Complutense. In 1960 he moved to Paris, where he edited the monthly «La Table Ronde» and later became the President of the International Foundation for Human Sciences.

¹²⁸ Diary Northbrook, 13 May 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹²⁹ The match was played in Fahy’s field opposite Renmore Military Barracks in Holy Week 1953. Oliver Powell was in his final year at secondary school and played for Corinthians Rugby Club.

¹³⁰ Desmond Sweeney was born in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal in 1935 and died in Amsterdam in 1993. He studied civil engineering and joined Opus Dei in 1955. After working professionally in Ireland for a short time, he went to Holland where he was on the staff of the Delft University of Technology. With two others he started the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Holland. He died 9 August 1993.

¹³¹ Kevin O’Byrne was born in Galway in 1934 and died in Nairobi, 29 May 2008. He joined Opus Dei in 1955. A Civil Engineering graduate, he moved to Kenya in 1958. Together with other members of Opus Dei, in 1961 he started Strathmore College, the first multi-racial college in Kenya.

DEVOTION TO ISIDORO ZORZANO

During these early years, members of the Work had great devotion to the Servant of God Isidoro Zorzano, one of the first members of Opus Dei, who died with a reputation for holiness in 1943¹³². The informative process, the initial step in opening a cause of beatification, began in Madrid in October 1948. However, recourse to his intercession had begun before then and the resolution of concerns were entrusted to his intercession a lot. This was especially so when praying for someone's possible vocation. As mentioned, José Ramón Madurga prayed insistently to Isidoro Zorzano for Cormac Burke's vocation to the Work. In mentioning an occasion when someone was being spoken to about joining the Work, Cormac Burke relates that «Those of us who weren't speaking to him – and those of us who were – spent their time commending his vocation strongly to Isidoro»¹³³. Similarly an *Hoja Informativa* relates: «We are entrusting this (apostolic) plan strongly to Isidoro, especially the vocation of N whom we hope will be “ours” tomorrow, because we haven't been able to see him today»¹³⁴. Professor Seamus Timoney, a mechanical engineer, credited Isidoro Zorzano with his finding Opus Dei. He used to explain that he had been looking for something, for a deeper commitment in his faith. When he read about the life of the engineer Zorzano, he was impressed and immediately felt that Opus Dei was what he was looking for. An article on Zorzano had appeared in a professional publication called *The Engineer*. Timoney was working in England at the time

¹³² Isidoro Zorzano was born in Buenos Aires on September 13, 1902. His parents were Spanish, and the family moved back to Spain from Argentina when he was still quite young. One of his schoolmates at the Institute of Logroño was St. Josemaría Escrivá. This turned out to be a decisive factor in his life. In 1927, he finished his schooling in Engineering in Madrid. On August 24, 1930, he asked for admission to Opus Dei. He always gave a luminous example of fidelity to God's call in the middle of the world. From 1936 to 1939, during the religious persecution unleashed in Spain and the ensuing civil war, he displayed heroic courage. At the beginning of the forties, he first began to experience the symptoms of the illness that led to his death: Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Doctors, nurses, and religious who treated him were amazed at the spiritual cheerfulness with which he bore his acute pain. He died on July 15, 1943, after having received the Anointing of the Sick from the Founder of Opus Dei. His reputation for holiness spread rapidly after his death, and his cause of canonization was opened in Madrid in 1948. A process was opened in 1964 in Montreal to examine a miraculous healing attributed to his intercession. He was declared venerable on 21 December 2016.

¹³³ Testimony of Cormac Burke, AGP, serie M.2.1, 20-4, p. 12.

¹³⁴ «Hoja Informativa» 5, p. 6 (from Dublin, 27 April 1949).

and wrote asking for information. The Northbrook diary mentions that in August 1952 Timoney, «who had once written to Joe [José Ramón Madurga] asking about the Work» had been met¹³⁵. In 1954 Seamus Timoney moved back to Ireland, where he was able to be in closer contact with the Work. He joined Opus Dei in December of that year, the year *God's Engineer*, a biography of Zorzano, was published¹³⁶. Isidoro Zorzano was declared venerable in 2016.

A FURTHER IMPASSE WITH ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE

In January 1951 Cormac Burke received a call from Monsignor R.J. Glennon, Chancellor of the Dublin Diocese, who wanted to meet him. He put a series of questions to Burke and started noting down the answers; questions about the nature of Opus Dei, the relationship of the members, its relationship with the bishops, etc. Cormac Burke answered as best he could «but I was really sort of scared stiff»¹³⁷. Immediately afterwards, he jotted down the whole conversation in detail and sent the account to Rome, «feeling I had sort of put my foot in it, in such a serious matter». Don Álvaro del Portillo replied, on behalf of the founder, that it would be interesting to continue these conversations. Burke relates: «Sometime afterwards, our

¹³⁵ Diary of Northbrook, 9 August 1952, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-33.

¹³⁶ Professor Seamus Timoney (1926-1991) was a professor of Mechanical Engineering with international renown. Known as “The renaissance man of Irish engineering” («The Irish Times», 1985), he carried out innovative research on diesel engines and was an expert in the use of ceramics in engines. In 1981, seeing the importance of technology transfer for third world countries, he devised what was then a radical and practical project. Working with the Tanzanian government of Dr. Julius Nyerere, he brought engineers and technicians from Tanzania to Ireland and taught them how to design and build a simple, rugged and economical transport vehicle suited to the challenges of the terrain in the interior of the country. On his death, the Tanzanian Prime Minister referred to him as «one of the best and most sincere friends of Tanzania», and they set up the Timoney Memorial Library in his honour. His list of academic publications, academic honours, positions on boards and on national and European bodies, patents, innovations and research programmes is long. In 1987 he was the first Irishman to be elected a foreign member of the Fellowship of Engineering in Britain. After his death, University College Dublin established the “Timoney Postgraduate Research Award” in his honour. He was a profoundly spiritual man and saw his professional work as part of his Christian calling: a service to God and to others. The Timoney Leadership Institute draws inspiration from the example of leadership which he set in his academic, business and personal life (www.timoneyleadership.ie).

¹³⁷ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 39.

Founder told me that the Holy Spirit was helping me, because I answered without any knowledge of Canon Law and simply said what common sense suggested, perhaps with some juridical sense, but really with common sense, since the Work is something simple»¹³⁸. Between 21 March and 6 April 1951, Cormac Burke had four meetings with Monsignor Glennon. Then José Ramón Madurga was called to Rome for consultations. On his return he requested to see the Archbishop, as he had brought with him a letter from the founder of Opus Dei with some accompanying official documents from the Holy See¹³⁹. Don Álvaro del Portillo, as Procurator General, had sent a series of questions to the relevant Sacred Congregation of the Holy See¹⁴⁰. The reply was received on 21 April 1951¹⁴¹. The founder wrote to Dr. McQuaid on 22 April, with information on aspects of the canonical situation of Opus Dei of interest to the Archbishop and reiterated the desire to establish a centre or a university residence¹⁴². Dr. McQuaid was evidently struggling to come to terms with the fact that Opus Dei was not some kind of religious order. The documents supplied addressed questions such as: whether the members of Opus Dei needed the bishop's permission to live their secular lives within the diocese; whether the members of Opus Dei needed the bishop's permission to do personal apostolate in the diocese; whether they needed the permission of the bishop to live together like a Christian family; whether the bishop should know the names of all the lay members. The answers to all of these was negative. These points were most likely the gist of the Archbishop's difficulty. The founder's letter, the recent correspondence with the Holy See and other documents were handed over in a meeting with Monsignor Glennon. The next day, 2 May 1951, Madurga and Burke met the Archbishop for a very brief and perceptively cold reception. There was not much to be said, and little was in fact said. A reply was received from Dr. McQuaid in May¹⁴³, where he thanked the founder for his personal letter and wrote:

It is a pleasure to inform you that at no time have I been opposed to the establishment of a centre of OPUS DEI at Dublin. If the work be of God, I

¹³⁸ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 40.

¹³⁹ Rescripts Nos. 6357/49, 6388/49, 6649/47, AGP, serie L.1.1, 10-1-26/28.

¹⁴⁰ Letter, 9 April 1951, AGP, serie E.4.2, 95-1.

¹⁴¹ AGP, serie E.4.2, 95-1.

¹⁴² Letter, 22 April 1951, AGP, serie A.3.4, 263-1.

¹⁴³ Letter, 5 May 1951, AGP, serie E.4.2, 95-2.

can only favour it; and the patronage of the Holy See proved to me that the work is indeed of God.

I have asked for information and I have refused permissions for the reason that, as Archbishop, I feel it my duty to understand very clearly the nature and effects of any proposal affecting my Diocese. Within a short space of time, over one hundred and fifty Institutes have asked my permission for a Foundation in Dublin¹⁴⁴.

The Archbishop then went on to outline his continuing concerns, the main one being what today would be called 'localization'. At one stage he suggested that the Jesuit Fathers might be asked for ongoing orientation on this aspect. While he accepted everything the documents of the Holy See indicated and that Opus Dei was acting in accord with these, he still felt that this way of doing things was «counter to our traditional method of life in Ireland»¹⁴⁵. This assessment echoed the views of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Cashel Dr. Jeremiah Kinane, whose advice he had sought some months earlier. While willing to accede to a formal request for a Centre, Dr. McQuaid felt that it would be better to wait until the time was more opportune. A few weeks later, in May, Saint Josemaría sent a lengthy reply to the Archbishop¹⁴⁶. In October, Álvaro del Portillo wrote to the members in Dublin instructing them that they were to cease speaking to anyone about joining the Work until the matter was resolved, as «it is a thousand times preferable to keep the peace and show the respect that is due to the Archbishop». They were to continue living their normal lives cheerfully, making friends, but no more¹⁴⁷. «This was the toughest thing that happened», comments Burke; «not being able to speak to anyone about joining the Work was a tremendous blow». A year passed and in April 1952 the Founder wrote again to the Archbishop¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁴ Salvio Carreiras used to relate that at some meeting in Archbishop's House a sheet of paper was produced on which there were with two columns of Catholic entities, one of men and the other of women, seeking admittance to the Archdiocese of Dublin. The impression given was that due to this long list of other institutions it would be in the long term that Opus Dei might receive acceptance. This account is based on a written note by Rev. Philip Griffin following a conversation he had with Carreiras in 1982, Archive of the Prelature, Dublin.

¹⁴⁵ Letter, 5 May 1951, AGP, serie E.4.2, 95-2.

¹⁴⁶ Letter in Italian from Mons. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer to Mons. John Charles McQuaid, 25 May 1951, AGP, serie A.3.4, 263-1.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Álvaro del Portillo to members, 15 October 1951, AGP, serie E.4.2, 95-2.

¹⁴⁸ Letter in Italian from Mons. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer to Mons. John Charles McQuaid, 12 April 1952, AGP, serie A.3.4, 263-4.

BLESSED ÁLVARO DEL PORTILLO'S VISIT AND THE RESOLUTION OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

After the Netherhall course in 1952 Cormac Burke remained in London to do some research at the British Museum. At the beginning of August a message came that Álvaro del Portillo was coming to London and that Burke was to accompany him to Dublin. Dick Mulcahy and some other Irish members were there also. Burke relates: «It was a memorable occasion for London, as it would be for Dublin. The night he arrived we had a squashed get-together in John Anthony's [Galarraga] room and Don Álvaro [del Portillo] spoke to us a lot of Rome and the Father... I remember a moment I was with him and one or two of the Irish chaps in the corridor. I was happy to see Don Álvaro with all the Irish vocations around him. He didn't miss it. He turned to me and asked me smilingly if I didn't feel some of the pride of paternity. And I readily confessed that I did. I was glad that he made the remark, for I had often had that feeling before. And realised that it was something more than an older brother feeling»¹⁴⁹.

Blessed Álvaro del Portillo and Cormac Burke flew to Dublin on Monday, 4 August. Contact was made with the Archbishop and a meeting was arranged for 12.30 pm on Wednesday 6 August¹⁵⁰. On Monday and Tuesday Del Portillo was brought to see some heritage sites near Dublin¹⁵¹. As Monsignor Álvaro del Portillo was a personage of the Roman Curia, Dr. McQuaid invited him to lunch on the Wednesday and subsequently to dinner the following day. They got on very well and the apprehensions of the Archbishop melted away. In fact, the diary entry for Wednesday recounts that «Álvaro del Portillo tells us good news and the hunt for houses is on»¹⁵². Dr. McQuaid immediately gave permission for two centres to have an oratory with reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. These would be a residence for men and another for women. In the end, everything was resolved and

¹⁴⁹ Testimony of Cormac Burke, AGP, p. 42, serie M.2.1, 20-4.

¹⁵⁰ Dublin Diocesan Archive, AB8/B/LVIII/19/2.

¹⁵¹ The diary relates that on Monday a car was hired and Álvaro del Portillo was brought to see Glendalough, an important site of monastic ruins (6th to 13th century) associated with Saint Kevin. On Tuesday, he was brought to Tara, ancient seat of the High Kings of Ireland; to Drogheda, where there is the relic of the head of St. Oliver Plunkett; to Old Mellifont Abbey, the first Cistercian monastery in Ireland; and also to the Boyne Valley, with its megalithic passage graves (Diary Northbrook, 4-5 August 1952, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-33).

¹⁵² Diary Northbrook, 6 August 1952, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-33.

the Archbishop even offered some advice on properties that might be suitable. Immediately the people of the Work began to look again at the old files of houses which they had from some years earlier, when the search first began. A particularly interesting house was noticed (not Nullamore), which Del Portillo was keen to see. But as he had to catch the plane at lunch time, they went to see the house just from the outside and rushed off to the airport. «What a four days we have had – the diarist writes – to be remembered a long, long time!!»¹⁵³. A few days later, the Chancellor of the Dublin Diocese wrote to Monsignor del Portillo, on behalf of the Archbishop, sending him the two *venias* dated 11 August 1952¹⁵⁴, one for a men's centre and another for a women's centre.

Some years later, during his visit to Ireland, Saint Josemaría met Dr. John Charles McQuaid in Archbishop's House, Dublin. Father Joe Navarro, the Counsellor of Opus Dei at the time, relates: «As explained earlier, relations with the Archbishop had been difficult initially, during 1950-53. Notwithstanding this background, the Father wanted to meet the Archbishop. The Father and del Portillo went to visit the Archbishop. On returning home the Father appeared in good humour and told us there had been a very cordial interview»¹⁵⁵. During the interview the Archbishop spoke in French and Saint Josemaría in Italian. Afterwards Álvaro del Portillo mentioned that at the end of the visit the Archbishop said a number of times that the Father had an extraordinary charisma. Some years later, Monsignor Liam Martin¹⁵⁶, who was Dr. McQuaid's secretary at the time, told members of Opus Dei that the Archbishop said to him that it had been a grace of God to have met the founder.

¹⁵³ Diary Northbrook, 8 August 1952, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-33.

¹⁵⁴ Letter, 12 August 1952, plus 2 *Venias*, AGP, serie E.4.2, 95-1.

¹⁵⁵ *Una Visita de Nuestro Padre 1959*, Archive of the Prelature, Dublin, p. 25.

¹⁵⁶ Monsignor Liam Martin (1918-1981), from Ballylongford, Co. Kerry, was ordained for the Dublin Diocese on 30 May 1942. He was appointed secretary to Archbishop John Charles McQuaid in 1948, a position he held also under Archbishop Dermot Ryan, the successor to Dr. McQuaid. In 1974 he was appointed parish priest of St. John the Baptist, Clontarf. In November 1975 he became a member of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, an association of clergy intrinsically united to the Prelature of Opus Dei. He died suddenly on 18 March 1981.

FINDING AND ACQUIRING A SUITABLE PREMISES AS A UNIVERSITY STUDENT RESIDENCE

Having obtained the *venias*, the objective was to find a suitable property for a men's student residence, with the idea that the Northbrook Road house would become a women's residence. The morning after Blessed Álvaro del Portillo's departure, the search for a house got going energetically. All the houses on the market were looked at, but nothing suitable was found. Then they began to look at properties that were not on the market. Some went out on bicycles surveying areas, keeping an eye out for a suitable place. On Thursday 27 August, there is mention of a lot of talk about a house called 'Noorsdale', though the diarist is unsure of the name. This may in fact be Nullamore, the neighbouring house, which oral tradition suggests. Dan Cummings remembers news being brought back about Nullamore, which could not be seen from the road, as it had a long avenue and was surrounded by trees. The house was large, the grounds extensive and the location good (see photographs nos. 11, 12 & 13). A five-minute suburban rail trip from the station alongside Nullamore would bring students to University College Dublin, then located near the city centre in Earlsfort Terrace. It was a wonderful find. Investigations were made as to the owner, Mr. Gerard Minch. This was a Protestant-sounding name. The initial fear was that this would not help in acquiring the property and even if he could be convinced to sell, it could not be expected that he would sell for a bargain price. It turned out that Mr. Minch was a Catholic, a Knight of Malta and a very straightforward and sincere person. He immediately grasped the spirit of Opus Dei and became enthused by the Work. «It's funny you come» he said «because my family is grown up and we were just beginning to think that this house is too large and are just about to put it on the market»¹⁵⁷. So, they were the first customers! Then the question of price arose and discussions took place. What Mr. Minch did not realise at that stage, but did so later, was that his prospective buyers had no money.

Many other houses were also looked at. Two others in particular impressed them: 'Newstead' in Clonskeagh and 'Simmons court Castle' in Ballsbridge. There is a study document comparing the three houses under fourteen different headings¹⁵⁸. Regarding location, Simmons court rated

¹⁵⁷ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 77, p. 88.

¹⁵⁸ See assessment on pp. 43-44, AGP, serie G.5.3.1, 199-2-2.

the best, with Nullamore good and Newstead only fair. The appearance of Simmonscourt Castle and Newstead were regarded as «Excellent», while that of Nullamore was felt to be «fair». All had four reception rooms, but Nullamore had 10 bedrooms, while the others had seven. All had good catering and staff quarters. The grounds of Simmonscourt Castle were 16 acres (6.5 Hectares) in size, Newstead was 8 acres (3.25 Hectares) and Nullamore had 7 acres (2.83 Hectares). Regarding potential for extending the house, Simmonscourt Castle was not good; Nullamore's situation was felt to be good, as was that of Newstead. When it came to availability, Nullamore stood out, as it could become available as soon as the current owner found a new house, possibly before February 1953. The availability of the other two houses was not at all clear. Finally, an auctioneering friend estimated that the cost of Simmonscourt Castle would be in excess of £30,000. In fact it was expected that the owner would ask for substantially more. The figure for Newstead was £18,000 and the price of Nullamore was estimated at £22,000. There are also some sketches made of the Nullamore property and the possible layout of the house¹⁵⁹. It was decided to go for Nullamore.

To raise funds, acquire the house and set it up as a university student residence, the first of a number of future residences, a public limited company was set up called University Hostels Limited. The Residence would be a corporate apostolate of Opus Dei¹⁶⁰. The project was explained to a number of prominent people, who were asked to lend their support to the setting up of the company. The most distinguished was probably the Earl of Wicklow¹⁶¹. Among the other members of the Board were Charlie Brennan, an insurance broker and Alexis Fitzgerald, solicitor, both well known in Dublin business circles. With their help the company was set up. The first Board meeting took

¹⁵⁹ See sketches on pp. 45-46, AGP, serie G.5.3.1, 199-2-1.

¹⁶⁰ A corporate work of apostolate is one which is promoted by members of Opus Dei in collaboration with others, and bears the moral guarantee of the Prelature. Opus Dei takes responsibility for all that relates to its Christian orientation. The main activity of Opus Dei is an unobtrusive one, consisting in offering its members, and other people, the spiritual means they need to live as good Christians in the midst of the world. However, as the Founder has explained, «moved by a desire to contribute to the solution of each society's problems, which are so closely related to the Christian ideal, it also has some other 'corporate' activities».

¹⁶¹ William Howard (1902-78) was the 8 Earl of Wicklow. He held the courtesy title of Viscount Clonmore until succeeding to the earldom in 1946. He was educated at Eton College, Magdalen College (Oxford) and St. Stephen's House (Oxford). He was ordained deacon and priest in the Anglican Communion, but converted to Roman Catholicism in 1932 and thereafter lived as a layman.

place on 30 April 1953 and the subsequent meeting on 18 June reported that Mr. Cavanna had entered into a contract for the purchase of Nullamore, Milltown, Dublin for the sum of £18,500 from Mr. Gerald Minch. It was also estimated that alterations and furnishing would cost a further £7,500 and that Mr. Minch had agreed to allow £6,500 of the purchase money to remain outstanding on the mortgage¹⁶². The campaign was started to seek investors in the company all over the country, offering them a modest return on their investment. The members of Opus Dei divided the country into areas, made a list of people to contact in these areas and then went to visit them. Those visited were generally people likely to have sons or daughters going to university at some stage. There was a good chance that they would appreciate the need and see the benefits of the type of residences proposed. Many doctors, solicitors, bank managers, farmers, etc., were visited up and down the country. Sometimes visits were fruitless, other times surprisingly fruitful. These visits often involved overnight stays. For example, the diary of the house mentions Cormac Burke going on overnight 'Prospecting' trips to Waterford on 12 May and the Kilkenny & Cork regions on 20 May, arriving back on the 23 May with news of investors including the Cistercians in Mount Melleray Abbey, County Tipperary, who had decided to invest £200. A number of investors came from people who worked in the Electricity Supply Board (E.S.B.). José Ramón Madurga had worked there having completed his Engineering Masters, as did Salvio Carreiras. There are various references in the Northbrook diary to both small and relatively large investments from colleagues who worked there, for example, «Salvio had great news from the E.S.B... he was speaking to Dr. O'D, and he promised to invest £200...Mr. H whom Salvio saw this morning promised to invest £500... Everyone agrees that the E.S.B. is a great place and that there are wonderful people there»¹⁶³. In fact, the first supernumerary vocation in Ireland¹⁶⁴, Frank Neary, who would join the Work in 1955, was an engineer in the E.S.B. He met the Work through Michael Forde, a numerary member of Opus Dei who was also an engineer in the E.S.B.

¹⁶² Minute Book, University Hostels Limited, available at its registered office.

¹⁶³ Diary Northbrook, 21 May 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁶⁴ Diary Northbrook, 23 March 1953 mentions «word had arrived from Rome that we could begin the work with Supernumeraries here in Ireland» (AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34). Supernumerary members, most of them married, carry out an extensive work of evangelization among their friends, family, neighbours, and co-workers through their word and their example. Like all other members, they attempt to spread Opus Dei's message that ordinary life should lead to holiness.

Mention must be made of the gentlemanly and supportive approach of Mr. Gerard Minch in the purchase of Nullamore. He re-invested some of the purchase price of Nullamore in shares in University Hostels Ltd. Put another way, he had accepted shares in the company as payment for a significant amount of the money due to him. The diary of the centre relates that «Cormac ...told us that Mr. Minch had invested £1,000 and that he is a saint!!» The diarist remarks amusingly that £500 qualifies for the latter description nowadays! Also on the same day, Minch telephoned Cormac to say that he had been «talking with his solicitor about you moving into the house. He thinks a caretaker agreement is the best thing, but I think that's ABSURD, since you have half the house pulled down already! I tell you, move in there and we will tell no one about it». The diarist concludes that he is a gentleman and has a terrific admiration for the Work¹⁶⁵. The share issue of the company opened on 13 May¹⁶⁶ until 10 June. By the 19 May, subscriptions had reached £2,000. However, in the end only half the capital required was raised. So, a mortgage was required for the remainder of the asking price.

The secular nature of University Hostels Limited, and the involvement of Opus Dei solely in the direction of spiritual activities, was not always understood. On one occasion in 1953 Cormac Burke went to Derry to fundraise for Nullamore and paid a courtesy visit to the Bishop, Dr. Neil Farren¹⁶⁷. He spoke to him about Opus Dei and the Nullamore project. During the conversation mention was made in passing of seeking investors in University Hostels Ltd. Dr. Farren interrupted and said¹⁶⁸, «So you're looking for money?». «I'm looking for shares, my Lord» explained Burke. The Bishop then implied that he should have been consulted before «starting to ask for money». Burke tried to explain that he was not fundraising for charity; that University Hostels Ltd, was a commercial enterprise and he was looking for investments all over Ireland. Dr. Farren kept repeating his point of view and eventually Cormac Burke left, with the Bishop quite displeased. About two years later when Burke had moved to Rome, Monsignor Dominic Conway, who was spiritual director of the Irish College in Rome¹⁶⁹ and a good friend of Burke, phoned him to say that the Dr. Farren, Bishop of Derry, was there

¹⁶⁵ Diary Northbrook, 17 June 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁶⁶ Feast day of Our Lady of Fatima.

¹⁶⁷ Dr. Neil Farren was Bishop of Derry from 1939 until his retirement in 1973. He died in 1980.

¹⁶⁸ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 119.

¹⁶⁹ Monsignor Dominic Conway was subsequently Bishop of Elphin from 1970 to 1994.

and would he like to meet him? Burke declined, thinking this was the best thing to do. He mentioned this in passing to Álvaro del Portillo, who said that he should go to see the Bishop, even though Burke had explained the background of their last meeting. Blessed Álvaro del Portillo spoke to him about following the advice of the founder in these situations, saying that he should go to see him and try to make up. An appointment was made for the following day. Cormac Burke, accompanied by another Irishman, went to the Irish College and was shown into the room where Dr. Farren was waiting. To Burke's surprise, the Bishop embraced him while saying to his companion, «The last time I saw this fellow, I threw him out of my diocese!»¹⁷⁰. They became the best of friends after that.

THE SETTING UP OF THE FIRST ORATORY IN NORTHBROOK, AWAITING REFURBISHMENT OF NULLAMORE

Of course along with the fundraising efforts, daily life continued for those in Northbrook. There was special news on 23 March 1953, when Henry Cavanna announced that they could have an oratory there very soon and work on it began immediately. The diary explains: «This morning we began work on the Oratory. It has been a long time since the Work first came to Ireland and a long time to wait to have Our Lord with us in the house. It will be the first house of Opus Dei in Ireland to have an Oratory, the first of many. Ours is the privilege of preparing Our Lord's house and as might be expected some of St. Raphael's boys were round to help us»¹⁷¹. A lot of preparatory details follow. Then on Tuesday, 31 March 1953, the final touches were put to the installation of an oratory in the Northbrook. It was blessed by Father Joe Navarro who gave a short meditation afterwards, in which he emphasised to the lads of St. Raphael that, «if before, they had come to this house of Opus Dei in search of God and had found Him in the prayer which they were shown how to do, then even more so now they should come around and talk with Jesus who will be really present in the tabernacle. Whatever about the St. Raphael boys, we all realised what a tremendous difference it was going to make having Our Lord

¹⁷⁰ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 120.

¹⁷¹ Diary Northbrook, 23 March 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34. The apostolate with students and younger people in general is entrusted to the archangel St. Raphael. These younger people are often referred to as St. Raphael fellows.

here and we prayed that He would bring us many vocations». That was not all. It was a day of double celebration, as the diary continues: «Then he [Henry Cavanna] announced the really big news – the contract for Nullamore was signed by him today and so the house is ours – when the rest of the money is paid. We move in on July 1st according to present indications»¹⁷².

Henry Cavanna went to Rome on 6 April 1953 with the plans of Nullamore, plus «several letters for the Father, many good wishes and the records ‘Blue Tango’ and the ‘Londonderry Air’ by the Hallé orchestra with him (as presents)»¹⁷³. It turned out that Mr. Minch was visiting there at the time and he was invited to tea with Blessed Álvaro del Portillo. Cavanna returned two weeks later with presents from the Father, paintings, prints and ornaments for the Residence and lots of news. «The Father» he relayed «is now waiting for the ‘Miracles of Ireland’ since the ‘The Miracle of Ireland’ is now history!»¹⁷⁴. Cormac Burke also recalls Saint Josemaría’s talking about his expectation for the apostolate they could do by going to other English-speaking countries¹⁷⁵. The personal apostolate of those in Northbrook was flourishing, with students coming to study, doing some prayer and having get-togethers. The diary entry for 12 May mentions that in the evening there was «a fine crowd and they all did some prayer». A «very cheerful get-together» followed, with the observation that the fellows «understand the Work very well and have a terrific admiration for it. The great thing about some of these lads when they understand our way well is that they take to things very naturally, which is exactly as it should be; we know that the Father asks us often to live that naturalness which Our Lady lived in Nazareth, all that is needed is for some of these lads to join the Work. We are relying on Our Lady’s help for that in her month»¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷² Diary Northbrook, 31 March 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁷³ Diary Northbrook, 6 April 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁷⁴ Diary Northbrook, 19 April 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁷⁵ St. Josemaría harboured ambitions for Ireland, for the apostolate members could do in going to other English speaking countries: «Ireland has a mission in the world, especially in the English speaking world...which is half the world! Many Irish vocations are needed... You need to multiply by ten...being cheerful and hungry to go all over the world to serve our Lord, in love with Christ». Cormac Burke also recalls the Founder of Opus Dei speaking to him of the double mission of Ireland, in Ireland itself and in the whole world (AGP, serie A.5, 201-1).

¹⁷⁶ Diary Northbrook, 12 May 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

ADAPTING AND RENOVATING NULLAMORE

A lot happened over the summer of 1953. Preparations to adapt Nullamore for its new role took place over the period. Cormac Burke and Dan Cummings moved into Nullamore on Thursday, 18 June. The diary entry for 30 June describes what seemed like a typical day:

Nullamore is a hive of activity these days – Heating system men, contractor’s men, window glazers, gas men, Electricity Supply Board men, Water-Department Corporation men, painting men infest the place with more or less constancy. Plumbers arrived today to complicate matters. At odd intervals men are coming in with deliveries of everything from divan beds and dining room chairs and tables to W.C. cisterns, electric cables and crockery¹⁷⁷.

There is a small entry in Northbrook’s diary for 12 June with the ‘big news’ that Dan Cummings and another had passed their 3rd Medical examination¹⁷⁸. It is a useful reminder that all the people of the Work at the time were relatively young; many were undergraduates and a few fairly recent graduates. In reminiscing about the beginnings of Opus Dei in Ireland and the setting up of Nullamore, Cormac Burke replied when someone listening commented that “They were tough days”: «No, I don’t think they were tough days. I think they were days in which we were all young. And so we lived without many worries for the morrow, not really worried about those things. I imagine that José Ramón [Madurga] understood more¹⁷⁹.

When renovated, Nullamore had the capacity to cater for 27 students. However, almost immediately an additional wing was added to the house, which increased its capacity to 45. A diary entry tells its own tale: «The economic situation is always the same: there is not a single penny. So, Cormac [Burke] (planned to go) up to Belfast with the idea of meeting some interesting people who could give some money. We’ll keep in mind this journey. The first difficulty was to find a car... (and as they couldn’t) in the end the journey had to be postponed»¹⁸⁰. The difficulties involved in renovating and refurnishing the house and getting the extension built with

¹⁷⁷ Diary Northbrook, 30 June 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁷⁸ Diary Northbrook, 12 June 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁷⁹ Testimony of Cormac Burke, Dublin, 1977, p. 114.

¹⁸⁰ Diary Northbrook, 11 August 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

scarce resources should not be underestimated. Doing this without any loss of the family character of the house and to the standards required was also an achievement. A lot of people helped out in various ways and some with a hands-on approach in the painting and redecoration. Salvador Pérez (usually known as ‘Boro’), an artist who resided in Rome, began his preparations on 19 August for doing a number of paintings for the residence¹⁸¹. The main painting was the picture of Our Lady for the Oratory, based on a painting in the National Gallery¹⁸², Dublin. He also did some paintings for the dining room and some decorative panels in the house. By the time Nullamore opened it had been successfully transformed into a university residence of note. An article on Nullamore at the time, in the *Irish Tatler & Sketch* remarked on «an air of good taste and distinction, not only in the surroundings, in the house, but even in the very tone of that family life in which the residents live and develop»¹⁸³. The residence had a full house from the beginning.

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF NULLAMORE UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE

The official opening took place on Thursday, 18 November 1954. Present at the opening were the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Mr. John A. Costello; the Minister for Education, General Ristead Mulcahy; the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Liam Cosgrave; Colonel Patrick Mulcahy of the Irish Defense Forces; the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Alfie Byrne, TD¹⁸⁴; Mr. Eamon de Valera¹⁸⁵, TD, Chancellor of the National University of Ireland; Professor Michael Tierney, President of University College Dublin; Professor Jeremiah Hogan, Registrar of University Col-

¹⁸¹ Diary Northbrook, 19 August 1953, AGP, serie M.2.2, 299-34.

¹⁸² *Assumption of the Virgin* by Zanobi di Benedetto Strozzi (1412-1468), tempera on wood, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, image no. P367. It was widely recognised that he painted the angels with the faces of the first members of the Work in Ireland, although this was generally denied by those depicted.

¹⁸³ «The Irish Tatler & Sketch», June 1954.

¹⁸⁴ ‘TD’ is the equivalent of terms such as “Member of Parliament” (MP). It is the abbreviation for *Teachta Dála* in the Irish language, which indicates that the person is a member of *Dáil Éireann*, the lower house of the *Oireachtas* (the Irish Parliament).

¹⁸⁵ Eamon de Valera had been Taoiseach (Prime Minister), 1932-1948, 1951-1954, and subsequently 1957-1959, when he then resigned. He served two terms as President of Ireland, 1959-1973.

lege Dublin; various members of the diplomatic corps and other university staff (photograph no. 14). Saint Josemaría commented that normally this type of high-profile opening for centres of Opus Dei would be going too far. But, given the situation in Ireland it was appropriate, among other things, as it was a clear indication that Opus Dei was accepted in the country. This was evident also in the make-up of the Board of the Nullamore Association, which was soon formed to support academic and cultural activities for students and to help solve the on-going funding needs of the Residence. It included members of the Irish Parliament and senators, university professors and people from a variety of professions, reflecting the wide interest and support for the aims of Nullamore¹⁸⁶.

The Archbishop, Dr. Charles McQuaid, officiated at the opening and blessed the house. Cormac Burke relates that subsequently the founder often spoke about him as being a very holy priest. In the context of the time and the Archbishop's perception of things, he had felt within his rights at the start to say no. He had also felt that Cormac Burke and the others were outside their rights in apparently continuing to work. Then, when the misunderstandings were cleared up, he realised that he had been mistaken and acknowledged it. He could have left the situation rectify itself gradually. Instead, he rectified it in the most public, clearest and most delicate fashion. He realised that people were talking about an institution which apparently did not enjoy the approval of the Archbishop and that this situation was doing harm to the Church. For him, this was a complete *volte-face* and he did it graciously. Saint Josemaría remarked on his humility and love for the Church. The public image of Dr. McQuaid was that of a dignified, reserved and formal person.

By the time of the opening of Nullamore, Cormac Burke had moved to Rome, to Opus Dei's international centre of formation, the Roman College

¹⁸⁶ Early Board members of the Nullamore Association included the Earl of Wicklow; Patrick Bourke, director and general manager, Provincial Bank of Ireland; Charles Brennan, managing director, Brennan Insurances; Wilfrid Cantwell, architect; Thomas Clear, Professor of Forestry, University College Dublin; John A. Costello, TD, then Leader of the Opposition; Alexis Fitzgerald, solicitor; Charles J. Haughey, Minister for Justice; Patrick Leahy, Professor of Mechanical Engineering; Eoin Kenny, consulting engineer; Pearse McKenna, architect; Senator George O'Brien, Seanad Eireann (Irish Senate); J. J. O'Doherty, Electricity Supply Board; D.K. O'Donovan, Professor of Medicine, University College Dublin; Seamus Timoney, University College Dublin; Declan Bourke, accountant.

of the Holy Cross¹⁸⁷. He recalls the founder calling him to the Pensionato¹⁸⁸ one day, showing him the post that had just arrived from Ireland, with press cuttings from the national morning and evening newspapers¹⁸⁹ featuring the inauguration of Nullamore on their front pages. It was the big news of the day! The Nullamore house diary records the following:

Nullamore really hit the headlines today – the opening and blessing was the second item on the news from Radio Éireann at 1.30p.m. and it was also mentioned at 6.30p.m. The Evening Press and Evening Herald both carried the story, the former with a photograph of His Grace and Father Joe [López Navarro] on their way up the steps, the latter with a photograph of the house itself¹⁹⁰.

EPILOGUE

The opening of Nullamore in 1954 marked the end of a chapter and the beginning of another in the development of Opus Dei in Ireland. Within a few short years further centres were set up. When the final move was made to Nullamore, the women members of the Work took over the house in Northbrook Road¹⁹¹ and it became a student residence for women. For men students, Gort Ard University Residence (Galway) was opened in 1958 and Ely University Residence (Dublin) in 1959. For women students, Glenard University Residence (Dublin) was added in 1962.

Saint Josemaría had followed closely the birth pangs of Nullamore and the early development of Opus Dei in Ireland. When he visited Nullamore during his trip to Ireland in 1959, he dedicated a family Bible there with the words “*Omnia in bonum*, Josemaría 18-VIII-59” evoking St. Paul’s teaching

¹⁸⁷ Temporarily located in Villa Tevere – the centre of the General Council of Opus Dei – the Roman College of the Holy Cross was established in 1948 and was receiving students from the countries where Opus Dei’s apostolate was established.

¹⁸⁸ The gate lodge of Villa Tevere used provisionally as offices and accommodation.

¹⁸⁹ «Irish Independent», «Irish Press», «Evening Press», «Evening Herald».

¹⁹⁰ Diary Nullamore, 8 November 1954, AGP, serie M.2.2, 300-2. Radio Éireann was the national broadcasting radio station and the 1.30 pm news was its main daily news broadcast. The «Evening Herald» and «Evening Press» were the two largest national daily evening newspapers.

¹⁹¹ This house, 27 Northbrook Road, was sold in 1976. To preserve the name given its historical significance a centre for women at 41 Fortfield Road, Terenure, Dublin, was named Northbrook.

– «For those who love God everything produces a good result»: an aspiration particularly apt given the history of Nullamore and a permanent message of supernatural optimism, come what may, for the on-going apostolic endeavours in Ireland (photograph no. 16).

Chris Noonan is a graduate in Chemical Engineering from University College Dublin. He joined the Management Committee of Nullamore in 1972 and was Director of the Residence from 1977 to 1980. He was a member of the Regional Commission in Ireland from 1980 to 2002. Subsequently he was Director of Gort Ard University Residence, Galway until 2015. Currently he lives in Dublin and works for the Lismullin Educational foundation.
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Cormac Burke and José Ramón Madurga took this photograph of themselves in a mirror at their apartment, Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin, 1948 (Photograph no. 1).



José Ramón Madurga and Cormac Burke, Rosses Point, Sligo – Christmas 1948. (Photograph no. 2)



José Ramón Madurga and Cormac Burke, Rosses Point, Sligo – Christmas 1948 (Photograph no. 3).

HOJA INFORMATIVA

Nº 1

Navidad. Buena época para hacerlos llegar, por primera vez, esta Hoja familiar. Nace con el Señor, y la recibiréis en días muy propios para una vida de familia intensa. En adelante será un medio más de unión, de unidad, un instrumento de comunicación entre todos.

Cuando la recibáis, pensad que es pequeña, que tiene mucho que crecer, hacerse tan grande en la realidad como lo es ya en potencia y en espíritu. Por eso, habladle de ella al Niño Jesús, en estos días en que le hablaréis de todo: de la Obra y de vosotros, de la Iglesia y del Padre, de vocaciones, de dificultades, de alegrías, de preocupaciones y de trivialidades. De todo. Habladle también de esta Hoja que es tan íntima nuestra, y ya tan universal como la Obra.

" Ignem veni mittere in terram ". A eso hemos venido, a prender por todas partes el fuego que se encendió en el Portal de Belén: la vida de Cristo, por el Amor. En muchos sitios hacemos ahora ejercicios; que todos pongamos fuego en la correspondencia al Señor.

Y que lo llevemos pronto, a muchos, a muchos más. A los mejores. Todos tenemos que pedirle al Niño más santidad, más vocaciones, más alegría, mas entrega y mas eficacia. Para que el Padre pueda pronto tener en todos un instrumento de servicio a la Iglesia; tú, fiel a nuestro espíritu, sirves a la Iglesia como la Iglesia quiere ser servida, y la Virgen del Portal de Belén te sonríe.

NOTICIAS

Sagrarios nuevos

Porto, 8-XII-48

!Ya tenemos al Señor en casa! ¡Viva! ¡Viva!
!Y R. pitó! Es como para volverse locos de alegría. No sé como empezar a contarte cosas -!Son tantas y tan buenas!- La Señora se portó demasiado bien con nosotros. ¡Cuánta delicadeza! Parece un sueño.

Nuestro deseo era, como sabes, inaugurar el oratorio el día de la Inmaculada. La ofensiva "pro oratorio" comenzó el 20. Ayer a las cuatro de la tarde el antiguo "salón noble" de la casa era todavía un salón poco noble. Poco después llegó el altar. Dos días antes había llegado puntualmente el Sagrario y los candeleros de Santiago, traídos por un residente que fué a pasar allí unos días. Trabajamos como fieras y a las seis y media estaba el oratorio instalado a base de bien: dignamente, con detalle (lo único que nos falta son los reclinatorios o bancos que de momento quedan en el tintero por falta auténtica de medios). Vino D. Agostinho, el Sr. Bispo de Porto, y bendijo el oratorio a las siete. Había algo así como veinte rapaces, además de los de casa. D. Agostinho pronunció una platiquita.

Vinieron algunos invitados: el Alcalde y señora, Callem y señora (los dueños de la casa), el padre de Mario y alguien más de menos importancia. Muchos "rapaces".

Por lo menos, yo he sacado una buena lección: por muy obscuro que esté todo, con fé, todo queda claro. Creo que ya no seremos tan "incredulotes" como hasta ahora.

Reproduction of the front page of Hoja Informativa no. 1, December 1948.



First summer course, on the steps of 27 Northbrook Road, Dublin, summer 1949.

*(Standing, left to right) José Ramón Madurga, Miguel Ángel Montijano, Cormac Burke, José Luis González-Simancas, Salvio Carreiras, Another.
(Seated) Max Sabater, Carlos (Charly) Gómez Durán.
(Photograph no. 4)*



*First summer course, excursion to Glendalough, Co. Wicklow
(Standing, left to right) Miguel Ángel Montijano, José Luis González-Simancas, Carlos (Charly) Gómez Durán, Cormac Burke, Salvio Carreiras, Juan Antonio (John) Galarraga.
(Seated) Max Sabater, Another.
(Photograph no. 5)*

THE BEGINNINGS OF OPUS DEI IN IRELAND LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS FIRST CORPORATE APOSTOLATE, NULLAMORE UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE, DUBLIN IN 1954



*First summer course, outing to the Phoenix Park, Dublin.
(Standing, left to right) José Luis González-Simancas,
Cormac Burke, Miguel Ángel Montijano, Max Sabater.
(Kneeling) Salvio Carreiras, Juan Antonio (John)
Galarraga, Carlos (Charly) Gómez Durán.
(Photograph no. 6)*



*Tourmakeady formational course, August 1950.
(Photograph no. 7)*



*Tourmakeady formational course, August 1950.
(Photograph no. 8)*

THE BEGINNINGS OF OPUS DEI IN IRELAND LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS FIRST CORPORATE APOSTOLATE, NULLAMORE UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE, DUBLIN IN 1954



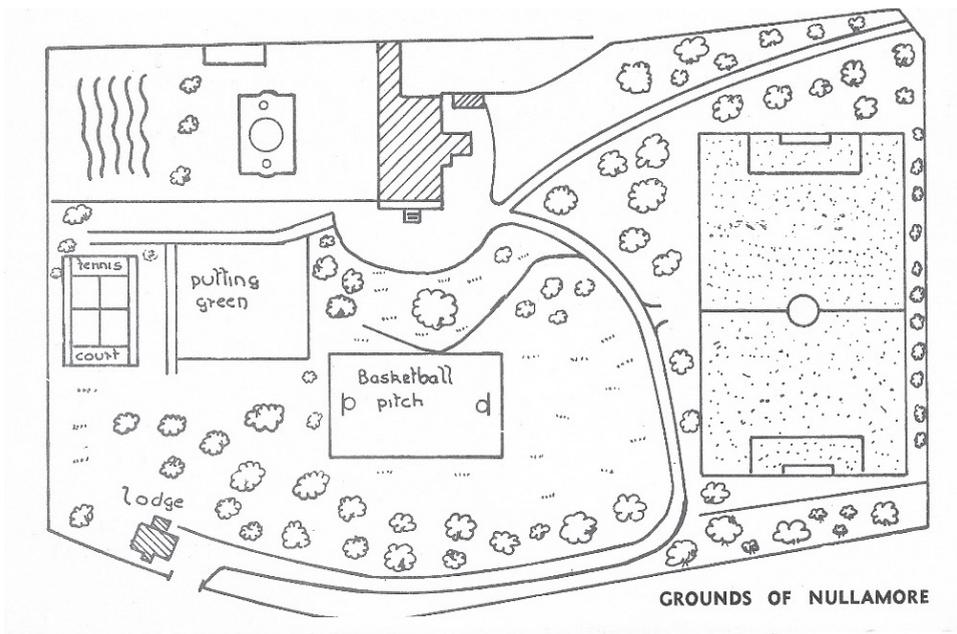
*Tourmakeady formatinal course, August 1950.
Listening to records on the wind-up gramophone.
(Photograph no. 9 and 10)*



*Nullamore House (1954).
(Photograph no. 11)*



*An aerial view of Nullamore and its grounds on acquisition.
(Photograph no. 12)*



*The redevelopment of the grounds
on becoming a student residence (from an early brochure). (Photograph no. 13)*

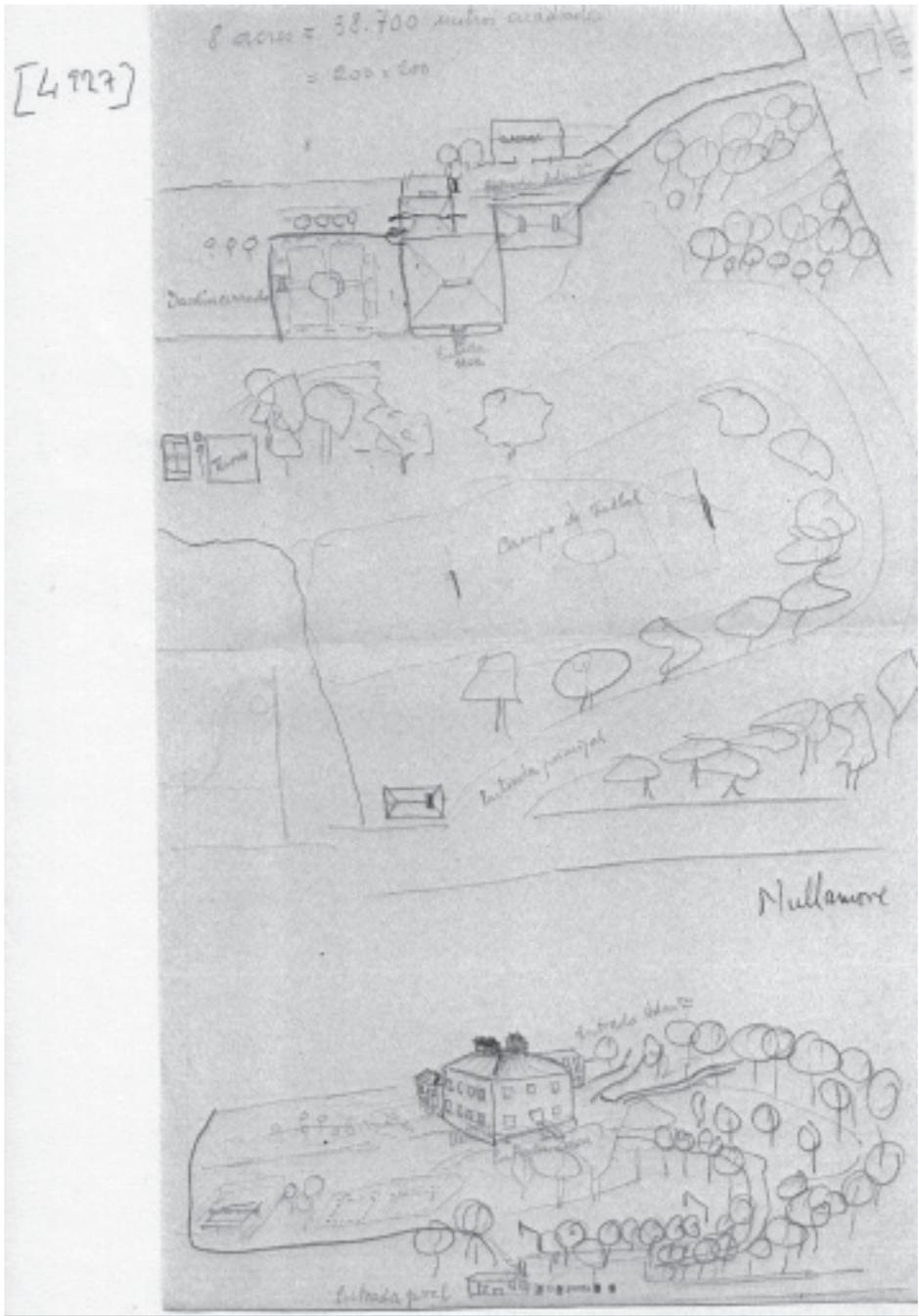
THE BEGINNINGS OF OPUS DEI IN IRELAND LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS FIRST CORPORATE APOSTOLATE, NULLAMORE UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE, DUBLIN IN 1954

	SIMMONSCOURT CASTLE	NULLAMORE	NEWSTEAD
Situation	Excellent. In best residential area, midway between present and projected Universities.	Very good Milltown Stn. opposite side entrance (opposite to Harcourt St.) 14 1/2 opp. main gate. Opp. Milltown Golf Course.	Fair: 12 mins. walk from 11 Bus Terminus (i.e. about 20 mins. from University). (Adjoining property of projected University.)
Accommodation:			
Reception rooms	4 (one can be divided into 2).	4 (kitchen converted into dining-room).	4 (kitchen converted into dining-room).
Bedrooms	7 (19 persons) & 2 in gate-lobby.	12 (37 persons) & 2 in gate-lobby.	7 (19 persons) & 2 in gate-lobby.
Staff quarters	Very good; bright; non-basement.	Basement; but bright and dry; large scullery can be converted into new kitchen.	Good; non-basement. Not dry; large kitchen is used as dining-room; scullery also will have to be built.
Facilities for dividing off staff quarters.	Internal separation - good. External two entrances, but long wall or hedge will have to be built.	Internal: good. External: good. Three entrances. Short wall will have to be built with excellent separate entrances.	Internal: good. External: fair; only one road entrance. Very long hedge will have to be planted along boundary wall.
Grounds (good, well-kept gardens in all three).	15 acres odd. One hard, two grass tennis courts. Area for fine football pitch.	7 acres odd. One grass court; lawns for two more. Area for small football pitch.	2 acres odd. Two lawn courts. Area for good football pitch.
Possibilities of extending house.	Don't seem good; only extendable wing is that of the domestic quarters.	Good. One new wing has been added already. Present buildings could be utilized; wall placed with respect to house.	Good. Same applies to outbuildings as to walls.
Appearance of house.	Excellent.	Fair.	Excellent.

Assessment of three properties, Simmonscount Castle, Nullamore and Newstead, prior to the acquisition of Nullamore in 1953, page 1.

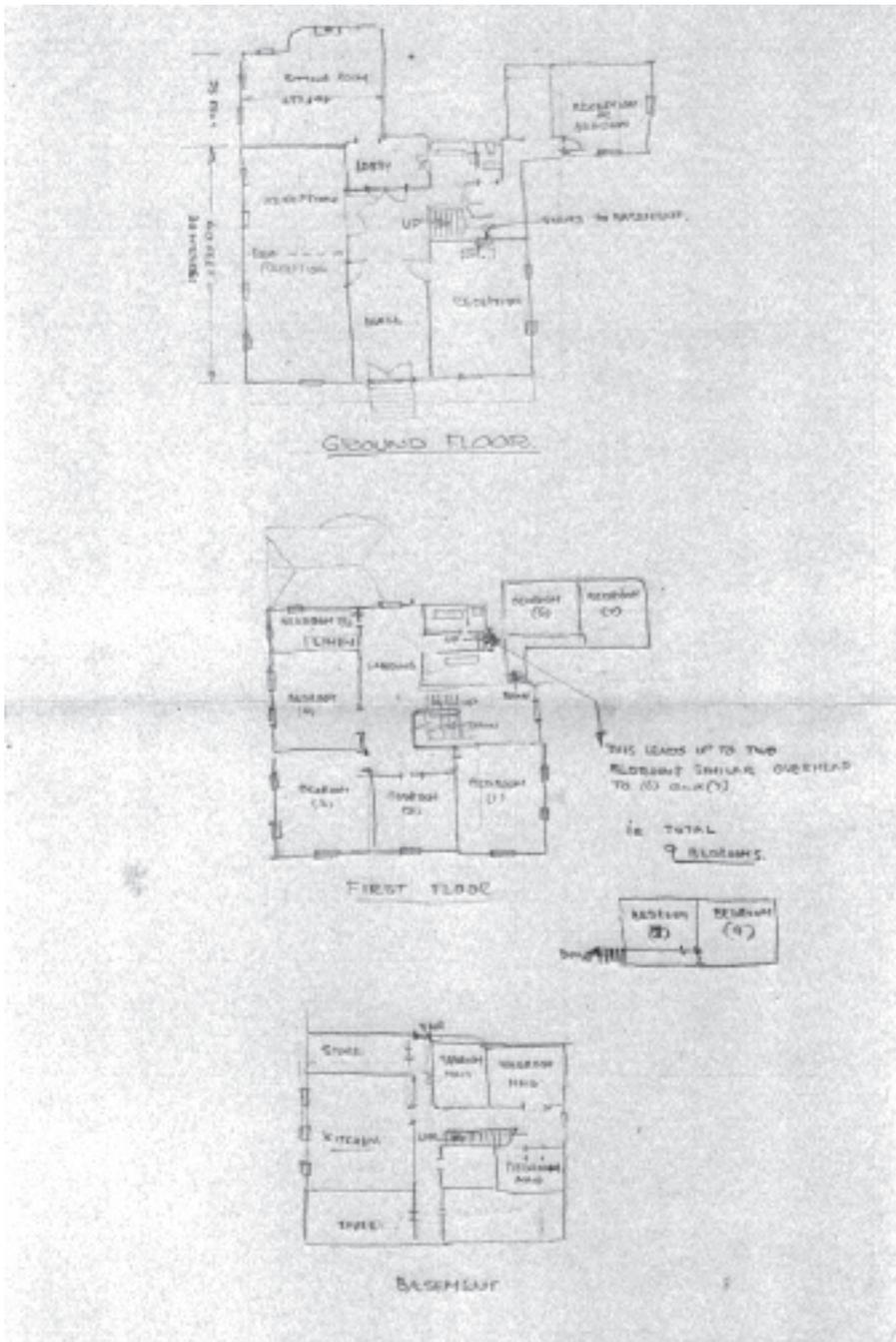
	SIMMONSCOURT CASTLE	NULLAMORE	NEWSTEAD
Central-heating	In some reception-rooms only.	In all reception-rooms, hall, and on landings.	Part. (reception room). At present: B.
Gardens kept.	At present 4 (29). A lot of market vegetables are grown. Perhaps part of gardens could be re-sown in grass.	At present: B.	
When available	?	In the event of a sale, as soon as the owner finds a new house, which he expects to be by February. <i>Actualmente está en venta por un precio fijo para siempre para siempre.</i>	Lease for 100 years.
Legal condition of property	Freshhold.		
Yearly outgoings on property	P.L.V. £120. No rent.	P.L.V. £127-12-0. Ground-rent. £46-12-6. £21,000 (which includes all carpets and curtains, and some other furniture so value, in all, of about £1400).	P.L.V. £200 No rent. £18,000
Price	?		
<p><i>Note: El P.L.V. es la cifra base para los impuestos municipales. Actualmente se paga 3% por cada libra. (O sea: fisco abogaría a £195 anuales.)</i></p>			

Assessment of three properties, Simmonscount Castle, Nullamore and Newstead, prior to the acquisition of Nullamore in 1953, page 2.



Sketch made of the Nullamore property, 1953.

THE BEGINNINGS OF OPUS DEI IN IRELAND LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS FIRST CORPORATE APOSTOLATE, NULLAMORE UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE, DUBLIN IN 1954



A possible layout of the house was made out, 1953.

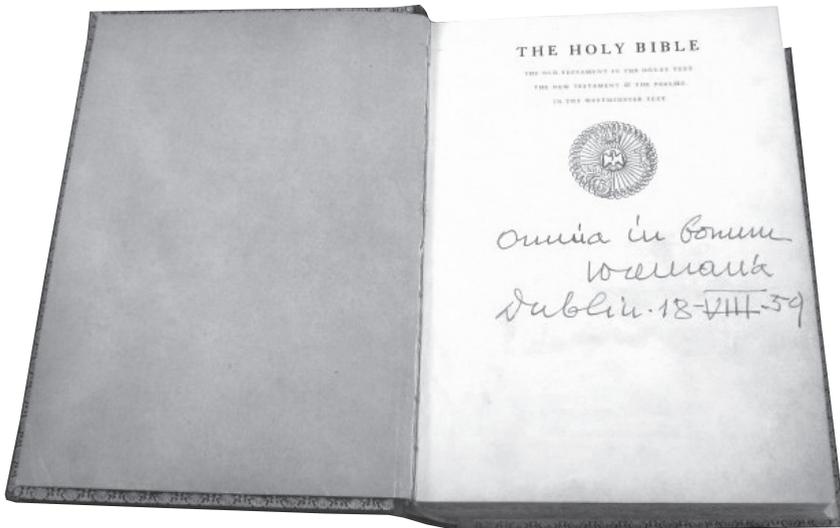


*Present at the official opening of Nullamore were the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Mr. John A. Costello; His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. John Charles McQuaid; the Minister for Education, General Mulcahy; the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Liam Cosgrave; Colonel Patrick Mulcahy of the Irish Defense Forces; the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Alfie Byrne, TD; the Earl of Wicklow; Mr. Eamon de Valera, TD, Chancellor of the National University of Ireland; Professor Michael Tierney, President of University College Dublin; Professor Jeremiah Hogan, Registrar of University College Dublin; various members of the diplomatic corps and other university staff, together with the Director of Nullamore, Mr. Richard Mulcahy.
(Photograph no. 14)*

THE BEGINNINGS OF OPUS DEI IN IRELAND LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS FIRST CORPORATE APOSTOLATE, NULLAMORE UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE, DUBLIN IN 1954



*General and Mrs. Mulcahy with saint Josemaría Escrivá and Father Richard Mulcahy, outside Ely University Centre, August 1959.
(Photograph no. 15)*



The dedication written by Saint Josemaría Escrivá on a family Bible in Nullamore, which is still kept there: "Omnia in bonum, Josemaría, Dublin. 18-VIII-59". (Photograph no. 16)