

Three perspectives on 'Opus Dei

<http://www.odan.org/index.htm>

The Opus Dei Awareness Network, Inc. (ODAN) was founded in 1991 to meet the growing demand for accurate information about Opus Dei and to provide education, outreach and support to people who have been adversely affected by Opus Dei.

ODAN challenges many of Opus Dei's Questionable Practices because of the way they affect an individual's personal freedom, choices and family life.

Since 1991, ODAN has been in contact with countless individuals, families, the secular and religious press, clergy, religious, cult awareness organizations, campus ministers, home-schooling parents and more.

ODAN is a worldwide community of people who have had painful experiences as a result of their association with Opus Dei.

Contact Us

ODAN is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

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What is Opus Dei?

Opus Dei is an organization founded in Spain in 1928 by Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer. The stated aim of Opus Dei is to "spread throughout society a profound awareness of the universal call to holiness and apostolate through one's professional work carried out with freedom and personal responsibility." (Encyclopedia of Associations)

Opus Dei is made up of lay members and priests; Opus Dei laity continue to work in the secular world, but remain under the strict spiritual direction of Opus Dei. All Opus Dei members follow "the plan of life," made up of spiritual practices such as daily Mass, rosary, spiritual reading, and mental prayer, as well as Opus Dei prayers and customs.

There are different classes of membership in Opus Dei:

Numerary members pledge to remain celibate and generally live in Opus Dei houses. They commit their entire salaries to Opus Dei, submit incoming and

outgoing mail to their directors, and practice various forms of corporal mortification, including use of the cilice, a spiked chain worn around the thigh, and use of the discipline, a knotted rope for whipping.

Supernumerary members may be married, and live with their families. They follow the same "plan of life" as the numeraries, but generally do not know about many of the details of numerary life. They contribute large portions of their income to Opus Dei, often at the expense of their local parishes.

Numerary priests join Opus Dei as lay members, but are then hand-picked by Opus Dei superiors to become priests of Opus Dei. Numerary priests hold the top government positions in Opus Dei. Many hold important positions in the Vatican. Each Opus Dei house is assigned a numerary priest, whose responsibilities include saying Mass, hearing confessions and giving spiritual direction to the Opus Dei members.

Associate Opus Dei members also pledge celibacy, but they generally do not live in Opus Dei houses. They include people who have not acquired university degrees, or who must remain with their families for personal reasons.

Numerary assistants are women who pledge celibacy, and are responsible for the care and cleaning of all Opus Dei residences.

Cooperators of Opus Dei provide financial support, but are not considered members of Opus Dei. Unlike Opus Dei members, cooperators do not have to be Catholic.

Despite its seemingly noble intentions, Opus Dei has stirred up controversy in countries all over the world. Families of Opus Dei members are almost never involved in the vocation process, (in fact Opus Dei itself often discourages its new members from even telling their families about their decision!) Also questionable are Opus Dei's recruiting tactics, which are comparable to the tactics used by cultic groups.

Perhaps most controversial is the effort to canonize Opus Dei's founder, Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, who died in 1975 and was beatified amidst substantial controversy in 1992, and was canonized on October 6, 2002 in Rome, Italy. See [ODAN's opposition to the canonization](#).

Also controversial in the early 1980's was the granting of Opus Dei to be a "personal prelature" within the Church. A personal prelature is an entity within the Catholic Church that is headed by a "prelate" (currently Javier Echevarria) and defined by persons rather than by geographical area (such as dioceses). Therefore, local bishops have little control over Opus Dei's membership, activities or practices.

Opus Dei has stated that there are approximately 80,000 Opus Dei members worldwide. Opus Dei is located in many countries, including England, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, countries in Central and South America, and many others, including the United States. Opus Dei generally locates in or near major cities, often near prestigious universities, where they hope to attract recruits.

Since its inception in 1991, ODAN has been in contact with people from all over the world who have experienced the questionable practices of Opus Dei. Many are former members; others who have contacted ODAN include parents, siblings and friends of current or former Opus Dei members; priests and religious, including bishops and campus ministers; news reporters from both the Catholic and secular press, and many more. From the contacts ODAN has made, it has become apparent that wherever Opus Dei is, there is controversy.

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The following practices of Opus Dei are not common knowledge and need to be examined and questioned. The serious issues ODAN raises are based on a collection of first-hand personal experiences.

- Corporal mortification
- Aggressive recruitment / undue pressure to join
- Lack of informed consent and control of environment
- Alienation from families

Corporal Mortification

Corporal mortification (self-inflicted pain and deprivation) is perhaps the most shocking practice. See the [corporal mortification](#) web page for more details.

Aggressive Recruitment

“University residences, universities, publishing houses. . . are these ends? No, and what is the end? . . . to promote in the world the greatest possible number of souls dedicated to God in Opus Dei...”(Founder of Opus Dei, *Cronica*, v, 1963)

Within Opus Dei, a heavy emphasis is placed on getting individuals to commit their lives to Opus Dei. Members' pursuit of potential members is aggressive and similar to the tactics used by totalistic groups. Because of this, ODAN believes the group violates the personal freedom of individuals.

- Opus Dei has a highly structured apostolate. Opus Dei members form "teams" and develop strategies to attract new members. For example, if the potential recruit is an avid skier, then the numeraries may plan a weekend ski trip, when the "numerary friend" is pressured to tell the recruit that she may have a vocation, after which the numerary must report back to the Director. If the recruit is receptive, then the Director may talk more in depth about the vocation. They discuss "promising recruits" at their daily get-togethers (for members only) and during spiritual direction with Opus Dei priests and lay members. Opus Dei members often know which recruits are closest to joining, even if the person is hundreds of miles away.
- Opus Dei members are typically taught to always have twelve to fifteen "friends," with at least three or four who are very close to joining. This leads to the utilization of friendship as "bait." Far too often, Opus Dei members drop friendships with those who are unlikely to join Opus Dei.
- Opus Dei members are required to report regularly to their lay Spiritual Directors on the progress of their personal recruiting. They also fill out statistics on their "friends," which may include the following: number of apostolic visits made; Opus Dei meditations attended; Opus Dei retreats made; confessions with an Opus Dei priest, etc. How does Opus Dei use this information? Why is it necessary? The recruits do not know they are being discussed and targeted in this way, a violation of their freedom and privacy.
- Opus Dei members befriend and cultivate young idealistic individuals through front groups at universities and schools and/or through affiliation with groups like Right to Life, young adult Catholic groups and St. Thomas More Societies. Some groups are completely Opus Dei-run and exist primarily for the purpose of attracting potential Opus Dei members. The groups' affiliation with Opus Dei is typically not immediately recognizable nor initially disclosed. An example of an Opus Dei "front group" is UNIV, an international convention of college students that is used by Opus Dei to attract "select" individuals who could potentially become members, particularly by participating in a yearly trip to Rome during Easter week when unsuspecting participants are aggressively pursued to make a commitment to Opus Dei while in Rome at the Opus Dei headquarters. These statements are based on the personal testimonies of former members, who also witnessed first hand the targeting of

potential Opus Dei members while participating in groups not necessarily run by Opus Dei. The Opus Dei members joined these groups in order to find and befriend individuals who would more likely join Opus Dei.

In addition to groups targeting young people, Opus Dei also attempts to attract potential "supernumerary" members by infiltrating parishes throughout the world. It is often very difficult to determine the extent of Opus Dei's influence in a given parish. Opus Dei members very often conceal their identity to "outsiders."

Undue Pressure to Join

Selected individuals are relentlessly pursued to consider a vocation or calling to Opus Dei.

- Opus Dei members carefully stage "vocational crises" at vulnerable moments in recruits' lives. The recruits are often told that God calls people at certain times in their lives, and if they say "no" they will never receive God's grace in their lives because they are "on the wrong track."
- Opus Dei members often tell their "friends" that failure to follow a calling to Opus Dei will lead not only to a life of misery and discontent, but possibly to eternal damnation.

Lack of Informed Consent and Control of Environment

When recruits decide to join Opus Dei, they vaguely commit themselves to live "the spirit of Opus Dei" without knowing the details of that commitment. The initial commitment, called "whistling," involves the writing of a letter to the prelate of Opus Dei asking to become an Opus Dei member. From that moment, new members are greeted with exuberance and welcomed into the fold. Eventually, the details of new memberships are revealed, and the new members are expected to comply, even if they object or have reservations. A great psychological burden is placed on the new members: they must be faithful to the commitment they have made by obeying all that their directors tell them is "the spirit of Opus Dei;" otherwise, they are turning their back on God. If they decide to leave Opus Dei, they have often already heard that they will surely live a life without God's grace, and may even be damned.

Opus Dei tightly controls the lives of its members, especially the numerary members who pledge celibacy and typically live in Opus Dei residences. The following are some examples of the controls placed on Opus Dei numeraries, which are part of the "spirit of Opus Dei:"

- Opus Dei numeraries are expected to hand over their entire salaries to Opus Dei, and generally may not hold their own bank accounts. The numeraries are told to use money as if they were the mother in charge of a large and poor family. They ask for the money they need each week and are then required to report how it was spent to the penny. Opus Dei does not provide any financial report that indicates how the members' money is spent.
- Both incoming and outgoing personal mail is generally read by the Directors of each Opus Dei residence, without the knowledge or consent of family and friends.
- Reading material is strictly controlled, as are television viewing, listening to the radio, and other forms of recreation and entertainment.
- Opus Dei numeraries notify their Directors of (and secure permission for) their comings and goings.
- Opus Dei numeraries are required to practice corporal mortification such as the use of a cilice (a spiked chain worn around the thigh), flagellation, and sleeping on the floor or on boards.
- Opus Dei numeraries are required to confess weekly and are strongly discouraged from confessing to a non-Opus Dei priest.
- Opus Dei numeraries typically may not attend events which are not conducive to proselytizing, such as athletic games, theater, concerts, movies, etc. In the rare

instances when they may attend these events, permission must be secured from the Opus Dei directors.

- Opus Dei members are enjoined to confess even their slightest doubts to Opus Dei priests and/or Spiritual Directors; otherwise, "the mute devil takes over in the soul."

Alienation From Families

Communication to family about involvement with Opus Dei is limited and even discouraged.

- Opus Dei teaches individuals (despite their ages) that it is acceptable and even advantageous to leave parents and loved ones out of the decision-making process because "they will not understand." Most parents learn of their child's lifetime commitment to Opus Dei months and even years later. Many times, parents do not realize their children have joined because the numeraries are told to remain in university residences and do not move into centers designated exclusively for numeraries, so as not to raise any suspicions. Gradually, the bond of trust between child and parent is broken.
- Display of pictures of loved ones is discouraged, not by rule, but by subtle example.

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Corporal mortification is regularly practiced in Opus Dei. It is perhaps one of the most startling aspects of Opus Dei life for people outside the group. Many of the practices of corporal mortification were at one time more regularly practiced within the Church; however, due to modern psychology and thinking, the practices which inflict pain are sometimes considered to be counterproductive to one's spiritual development, as they can easily lead to pride and an unhealthy attitude toward one's body.

Some acts of corporal mortification may be helpful in checking the desires of the flesh, such as fasting. However, in Opus Dei, especially for the numerary (celibate) members, all of the practices mentioned below are mandatory if one wishes to live the "Spirit of Opus Dei" fully. The "Spirit of Opus Dei" is the standard of living, as outlined by the Opus Dei directors, for which all truly dedicated Opus Dei members strive. Under the umbrella of the "Spirit of Opus Dei" hide many of the abuses in Opus Dei. The subtle control to conform to the norm is typical in groups which practice mind control; members are "guilted" into conforming, feeling that they must in order to follow "God's will" as it is outlined by the controlling group.

Listed below are the ways Opus Dei numeraries practice corporal mortification:

- **Cilice:** [\[Photo of cilice\]](#) a spiked chain worn around the upper thigh for two hours each day, except for Church feast days, Sundays, and certain times of the year. This is perhaps the most shocking of the corporal mortifications, and generally Opus Dei members are extremely hesitant to admit that they use them. It is a painful mortification which leaves small prick holes in the flesh, and makes the Opus Dei members tentative about wearing swim suits wherever non-Opus Dei members may be.
- **Discipline :** [\[Photo of discipline\]](#) a cord-like whip which resembles macrame, used on the buttocks or back once a week. Opus Dei members must ask permission to use it more often, which many do. The story is often told in Opus Dei that the Founder was so zealous in using the discipline, he splattered the bathroom walls with streaks of blood.
- **Cold Showers :** Most numeraries take cold showers every day and offer it up for the intentions of the current Prelate.
- **Meals :** Numeraries generally practice one small corporal mortification at every meal, such as drinking coffee without milk or sugar, not buttering one's toast, skipping dessert, not taking seconds, etc. For the most part, eating between meals is not

practiced. Opus Dei members fast on the Church's prescribed days for fasting, but otherwise must ask for permission to fast on their own.

- **The Heroic Minute** : Numeraries are encouraged to jump out of bed and kiss the floor as soon as the door is knocked in the morning. As they kiss, they say "Serviam," Latin for "I will serve."
- **Silences** : Each night after making an examination of conscience, numeraries do not speak to one another until after Holy Mass the following morning. (They do not say "Good morning" to anyone as they are getting ready.) In the afternoons, they try to avoid speaking until dinnertime. On Sundays, numeraries generally do not listen to music, especially in the afternoons.

Some forms of corporal mortification differ according to your gender, as the following table shows:

Female Numeraries	Male Numeraries
<p>Sleep on boards laid on top of the mattress.</p> <p>Sleep without a pillow once a week.</p> <p>May not smoke or enter a bar.</p> <p>The Founder believed that women had passions that required more discipline to tame.</p>	<p>Sleep on the floor once a week.</p> <p>Sleep without a pillow once a week.</p> <p>Allowed to smoke and go to bars with recruits, for the purpose of drawing them closer to Opus Dei.</p>

A former numerary wrote to comment on Opus Dei's corporal mortifications:

"The cilice and disciplines are so foreign to the experience of most people, that they just conclude that Opus Dei is very odd for mandating them. That is true as far as it goes, but there is a more important point to be made. Because of the dangers of masochism, the traditional Catholic teaching on this sort of mortification is that it be done under obedience to a spiritual director. Such supervision in fact exists in Opus Dei, although often authority is entrusted to people who lack requisite maturity and prudence. The real point is that even if the cilice and the discipline are acceptable forms of penance, their use shows that Opus Dei members are NOT ordinary people, are not free agents."

Relevant Quotes from the writings of Opus Dei Founder, Josemaria Escriva

"Blessed be pain. Loved be pain. Sanctified be pain. . . Glorified be pain!"
(*The Way*, 208)

"No ideal becomes a reality without sacrifice. Deny yourself. It is so beautiful to be a victim!" (*The Way*, 175)

"Obey with your lips, your heart and your mind. It is not a man who is being obeyed, but God." (*Furrow*, maxim 374)

"And be watchful, for a spark is much easier to extinguish than a fire. Take flight, for in this it is low cowardice to be "brave"; a roving eye does not mean a lively spirit, but turns out to be a snare of satan. Yet human diligence, with mortification, the cilice, disciplines and fasting are all worthless without you, my God." (*Furrow*, 834)

"They [Opus Dei numeraries] shall maintain the pious custom, for the purpose of chastising the body and reducing it to servitude, of wearing a small cilice for at least two hours daily; once a week they shall take the disciplines as well as sleeping on the floor, providing that health is not affected." (*Opus Dei Constituciones*, article 147)

"To defend his purity, St. Francis of Assisi rolled in the snow, St. Benedict threw himself into a thornbush, St. Bernard plunged into an icy pond... You... what have you done?" (*The Way*, 143)

"What has been lost through the flesh, the flesh should pay back: be generous in your penance." (*The Forge*, 207)

"If you realize that your body is your enemy, and an enemy of God's glory since it is an enemy of your sanctification, why do you treat it so softly?" (*The Way*, 227)

"Your worst enemy is yourself." (*The Way*, 225)

"You have come to the apostolate to submit, to annihilate yourself, not to impose your own personal viewpoints." (*The Way*, 936)

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Controversial Catholic group is given care of parish church

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

OPUS DEI, the conservative Roman Catholic organisation that counts Ruth Kelly, the Education Secretary, among its members, has been given its first parish in Britain since it was founded in 1928.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy- O'Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, is to hand over pastoral care of St Thomas More church, Swiss Cottage, to Father Gerard Sheehan, an Opus Dei priest.

Father Sheehan is one of 17 priests in Britain who work for the Opus Dei organisation. None of the others is a parish priest although Father Sheehan is local deanery secretary for the Westminster archdiocese and regularly hears confessions at Westminster Cathedral and St James' Spanish Place.

He will take over at Easter from Father Ian Dickie, who is to be moved to another parish.

The decision by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor to entrust the parish of 500 souls and their 1968 red-brick church to Opus Dei partly indicates that the organisation has "come of age" and is achieving

mainstream respectability within the Catholic Church in Britain.

Opus Dei, which means “God’s work” and which features in the Dan Brown bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*, has had a reputation for secrecy and some controversial practices, such as “mortification”.

But the organisation, a personal prelature outside diocesan jurisdictions, has moved out of the shadows and grown in confidence since the canonisation of its founder, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, in 2002, 17 years after his death.

John Allen, the Vatican correspondent for *The National Catholic Reporter*, is the author of a book on the organisation, *Opus Dei: Myth and Reality about the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church*, to be published by Random House this autumn. Mr Allen said that Britain is the only country in the world where a bishop issued guidelines to regulate Opus Dei’s activities.

In 1981, the late Cardinal Basil Hume, concerned about recruitment methods and secrecy in Westminster, stipulated rules concerning membership. He said that members should be 18, that parents should be notified when young people joined, that members should be free to leave and that Opus Dei activities should carry clear indications of sponsorship.

However, when Mr Allen interviewed Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor for his book, in November last year, the Cardinal told him: “I’m very content to have Opus Dei in the diocese.” The Cardinal said: “The Catholics I’ve met in Opus Dei have clearly been very dedicated Catholics, very committed to the particular path that is prescribed by Escrivá, which is the mission of lay people in their professional fields.”

Father Sheehan, 45, who works at Netherhall House — the student residence run by Opus Dei which is within the St Thomas More parish — joined the organisation while studying history at London University.

He said that he would not be on an Opus Dei recruitment drive. But he added: “I will certainly want through the ministry of a parish priest — the proclamation of the gospel and the exercise of the sacraments — to encourage the lay people in the parish to take adult decisions about where God is leading them. If for some of them that means Opus Dei, I won’t stop them. I also hope we will have vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.”

One reason that may have led to Opus Dei being offered the parish is the fall in the number of people joining the priesthood. Sources in the Church at Westminster said that there had been a "question mark" over the future of the church at Swiss Cottage because of the shortage of priests.

Opus Dei has 500 members in Britain. None attends the Swiss Cottage church regularly.

OPUS DEI'S PATH TO SANCTITY • Opus Dei was founded in 1928 by Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer in Madrid • He saw it as a way of encouraging lay people to aspire to sanctity without changing their jobs • His book, *The Way*, published in 1934, has sold four million copies • Señor Escrivá died in Rome in 1975 at the age of 73 • In 1992 Pope John Paul II declared him Blessed. He was canonised in October 2002 • Opus Dei has 85,000 members in more than 80 countries

<http://www.ianpaisley.org/article.asp?ArtKey=opusdei>

The Rising Spectre of Opus Dei

BRITISH CHURCH NEWSPAPER 1 & 8 November 2002
Clive Gillis

Opus Dei ('Work of God') is short for "The Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei".

Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, was canonised on October 6. The ceremony passed quietly enough but the process which led to it had been pushed through at break neck speed.

The media celebrated the occasion by republishing past revelations concerning St. Escriva's fascism, secrecy, elitism and accumulation of vast wealth, beneath headlines tactfully referring to him as "controversial". But there was a deafening silence concerning the menace posed by Escriva's huge, shadowy organisation which originated in obscurity in Spain in the 1930s and blossomed in the Spanish Civil War.

Storm of controversy

The present writer well remembers the storm of controversy which surrounded the beatification of Escriva in May 1992. The Jesuits, world over, cried foul as the ghost of Escriva arose from nowhere to overtake the Jesuit causes for sainthood of Newman and Pope Pius XII (The holocaust Pope). Shock -horror media reports and TV documentaries exposed the major part played by filthy lucre in the process of Roman saint making.

However, when the day for Escriva's canonisation came, 250,000 pilgrims attended an orderly, ticket-only ceremony at St Peter's, Rome. The BBC caught the angry reaction of latecomers refused entry to St Peters Square, but the cultic orderliness of the pilgrims kneeling on the cobbles, with priests distributing wafers, attended by minions sheltering

them under white umbrellas, seemed anything but controversial. Rather it conveyed the haughty detachment of Opus.

Dr Ian Paisley intends publishing some old articles by the present writer under the title, *Contemporary Rome Viewed Through History*. Chapter 4 deals with the origins of Opus Dei. Little reliable information about Opus has appeared since 1992, despite increasingly aggressive media enquiries.

Cult of Founder

The present leader of Opus is Madrid-born Bishop Xavier Echevarria, 70. He is only the third leader in Opus 74-year history. Echevarria was Escriva's former private secretary from 1953 until 1975. A leader for life, he replaced his predecessor bishop Alvaro Portillo on Portillo's death in 1994. This slow succession serves to preserve the sinister personality cult of the founder and safeguards the deadly ethos of the organisation for the future.

Pope John Paul II, who is anti-Jesuit, "granted it (Opus) the status of 'personal prelature' in 1982, meaning that its members' activities fall under Opus Dei jurisdiction rather than directly under their local bishop". It is amazing that Opus should have been granted such a lofty status even by a pro-Opus Pope. It is the key to the organisation's power. Opus does as it wishes, and an ambitious Bishop who crosses Opus does so at his own peril.

Reliable estimates of the membership have grown from between 75,000 and 80,000 in 1992 to between 80,000 and 85,000 today. It is well over three times the size of the Society of Jesus. Escriva once said, "I would prefer a million times that a daughter of mine die without the Last Sacraments than that they be administered to her by a Jesuit," yet he wept when the Jesuits had him to dinner.

Fabulous wealth

The organisation's Spanish roots led naturally to its spread in Latin America and other colonial Spanish regions. However its current growth in the USA shows that it has widened its non-Latin appeal in recent years.

The opening of a new 17-storey skyscraper headquarters in Manhattan, variously quoted as costing between 42 million and 54 million dollars, demonstrates the fabulous wealth of Opus.

The Opus business empire was built up by recruiting company directors while they were still at Business School. It was originally dubbed the "Holy Octopus" in Spain, but now its tentacles extend around the world. Research into Opus affiliated organisations suggests assets of half a billion dollars in the USA alone. There are known Opus business affiliates in over 20 countries and no doubt there are many more not known.

London headquarters

The London head quarters are at 5 Orme Court, London W2 4RL. Opus still recruits bright, idealistic and well connected children through education at sixth form or University level. Repressed Escriva always maintained total separation of the sexes. The UK London colleges are Netherhall House in Hamstead for men and Ashwell House in Islington for women. The rigid own-room policy, with a heavy educational programme, suits the agenda both of Opus and of fee-paying parents. Each college advertises separately and is run by a different charity. Ashwell is at present concentrating on medical education which is always popular with ambitious parents and children. The publicity now contains a small Opus disclosure: "The spiritual dimension of life," at Netherhall House/Ashwell House, "is entrusted to Opus Dei, a personal Prelature of the Catholic Church. There is a Chapel and a full-time Chaplain".

Scandals

The last 10 years have not been scandal free. Louis Freeh, Director of the FBI from 1993 to 2001 was exposed as an Opus member after the department was heavily pruned and allegations had surfaced that pyrotechnic devices were used to speed the end of the Waco Adventist siege.

The disgraced FBA agent, Robert Hansen, who was jailed for life in 2001 for spying for the Russians over a 15-year period in return for payment of almost a million pounds, was exposed as a devout Opus Dei member. It surfaced that "Hansen's brother-in-law was an Opus Dei priest in Rome whose office is mere steps away from the pope. One of their daughters is an Opus Dei numerary, a woman who has taken a vow of celibacy while remaining a layperson".

Hansen's motive for his treachery was a desire to afford the Opus Dei lifestyle, and send his children to Opus schools. He justified his actions by the maxim of the old Jesuit moral theology of the greater or lesser good. Other psychological explanations are probably just Opus disinformation. Roman Catholics have held many of the top posts in the CIA for some decades and it seems reasonable to conjecture that this is how Opus gained entrance.

'Pope's Secret Army'

Opus can apparently take direct action on occasions. In September 1994, the popular Portuguese magazine VISAO carried an article entitled, The Pope's Secret Army which was critical of Opus. VISAO was subsequently bombarded with unending Opus correspondence. This raised the cry that Opus only look after its own, for the magazine was renowned for criticising Rome in general and not publishing Roman Catholic responses. We are informed that, "Curiously enough, the offices of VISAO went up in flames shortly thereafter and since then VISAO has lost their appetite to criticize Opus Dei".

The alleged Opus connection with the extreme right wing and pro-Nazi movements in Europe keeps surfacing. So far the organisation has kept the lid on any evidence. Opus does this by lauding and only advancing those demonstrating fanatical devotion to secrecy. This is termed "holy discretion". However The Belgian Government were not fooled for a Belgian Parliamentary Commission Report on April 28, 1997 officially classified Opus as a sect.

The necessary miracle for Escriva's beatification was the overnight healing in 1976 of a Carmelite nun who was suffering from swellings. The miraculous cure was authenticated "in part" by Opus doctors. The second miracle, which was necessary for Canonisation, was the healing of Dr. Manuel Nevado Rey's skin condition. Here Opus has denied any complicity, but according to Jesuit Fr Reese's scholarly book, *Inside the Vatican*, it is understood that there are "members (of Opus) in every (Vatican) department", which renders Opus assurance valueless. Doctors know how "intractable" skin conditions can suddenly heal. As for Opus purchasing Escriva's sainthood, Father Esser a chief Vatican Saintmaker, has confirmed that Opus money eased the passage of the cause.

Illegal canonisation

The Canonisation of Escriva transgressed canon law. Kenneth Woodward, a journalist and an insider, has proved that the 'Devil's advocate' system was bypassed and witnesses hostile to Opus were not called.

Opus claims that eleven critics of Escriva's canonisation were heard, but Woodward says there was only one. The "consultors" were mainly Italian and members of Opus. This prevented Escriva's many critical Spanish peers upsetting the procedure. But it broke the convention that "consultors" should be the fellow countrymen of the proposed saint. Opus argues that Escriva was too "international" to need this.

What is more, it was out of order for forty per cent of the testimony to come from Escriva's two henchmen, both of whom have since become Opus leaders. Wealthy Opus is alleged to have pressurised "hundreds" of Bishops, especially from the cash hungry third world, to send favourable reports to Rome's saintmakers. It is alleged that 1300 Bishops sent in glowing reports. Yet of these only 128 had personally met Escriva. Furthermore, it appears that Opus have tightly restricted the Canonisation material even within the Vatican.

The De-humanising, anti-Christian spirit hidden within Opus, has recently been exposed by several courageous women who have left the movement. Escriva now faces damning charges that disqualify him from being regarded as a gentleman amongst natural men, let alone a saint and a type of God the "Father." The most complete of these accounts comes from founder member and former Opus high-flyer Maria del Carmen Tapia, who has now left the movement in disgust. Her manuscript entitled *Beyond the Threshold* was published in the face of massive Opus opposition, particularly to the English edition.

There are still anti-Opus websites clandestinely putting out snippets of the book in English, dating from when the book was secret and hot property.

Holy discretion

Opus met Tapia's accusations with total public silence ("holy discretion"). At the same time Opus secretly engaged a prominent Romanist who was too important to ignore, namely the Pope himself, to put his name to a refutation of Tapia which had been written for him by Opus top men. This is an ancient Jesuit tactic. Thus it was that while VISAO had lost its appetite for anti-Opus material and Maria del Carmen Tapia was struggling to get the English edition of *Beyond the Threshold* published, an enormously well publicised book by Pope John Paul II entitled *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* was published simultaneously in 38 countries and in 21 languages.

Dr. Joaquin Navarro-Valls, Vatican Director of the Public Relations Office of the Holy See, the highest profile member of Opus, was at a loss to explain why "neither the style of prose nor the central philosophies of this book are coherent with all other writings and words attributed to Pope John Paul II". Neither had he any credible defence against the charge that well-known chronological facts demonstrated beyond doubt "from a logistics and mechanical point of view,...(that John Paul II) would not have written the said book".

Tapia's expose has all the marks of genuineness. It is written in a gentle tone of sadness rather than anger. It is unique in that it gives not just appalling facts but more importantly, the deadly spiritual atmosphere of Opus. Tapia is revealed as a well-qualified and scholarly woman writing in her maturity. She realised that information on Opus is "scarce and unreliable" and simply asks that Escriva be more "justly appraised". Her book deserves wide distribution as the only recent major expose of Opus itself rather than of Opus scandals.

Certainly someone who had the time could use it to refute point by point, the official, saintly picture of Escriva as found in his official biography by German Professor Peter Berglar and published by Opus publisher Scepter.

Make her talk

Irascible Escriva is found to be continually raging over trivialities, particularly amongst the junior women who could not respond. His pride and vanity are all too clear to see. "Filiation towards the Father," far from being a relationship with God, is an exaltation of the man himself.

Escriva's true character is particularly vividly portrayed in the events of Tapia's final departure. Words cannot describe the harrowing scene in those pages as the Father demotes Tapia and her colleagues. "Monsignor Escriva breathed deeply.... You will no longer work for the Central Advisory... When Gladys left the sessions chamber Monsignor Escriva

told the central directress .. in the presence of the priests... (*what follows is not fit to print*) ...until she talks. MAKE HER TALK".

May the judgement of the Whore of Babylon be soon.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.