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50 years of Opus Dei in Canada

A recent article in The Catholic Register by Innocent Madawo tells of the Mass celebrated by Msgr. Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, in St. Michael's Cathedral.

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TORONTO - Hundreds of people crammed into Toronto's St. Michael's Cathedral June 20 to attend a Mass marking 50 years of Opus Dei's presence and work in Canada.

Mass was celebrated by Toronto's Archbishop Thomas Collins with the assistance of Msgr. Frederick Dolan, vicar of Opus Dei in Canada.

In his homily, Collins referred to the Gospel where Jesus recruited His first disciples, two sets of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, and James and John, whom he promised to be fishers of men if they followed Him.

“As we celebrate 50 years of similar work by Opus Dei, I encourage you to follow Jesus’ teachings and work for Him in your daily life,” said Collins.

The archbishop buttressed this after Mass in an interview when he said that the “excellent” work being done by Opus Dei members was one of the pillars that strengthen the Catholic faith in the world.

In Canada Opus Dei has about 600 registered members but thousands more are associates with the

organization in various ways, he said.

Opus Dei, described as a personal prelature of the Catholic Church that helps people seek holiness in their work and ordinary activities, was started by Spanish priest, St. Josemaria Escriva, in 1928. Pope John Paul II established it as a personal prelature in 1982. Opus Dei was introduced to Canada in 1957 and now has 19 centres across the country. Its members include priests, professionals, families and students. There are more than 85,000 Opus Dei members worldwide.

In an interview after the Mass, Dolan said the organization coaches people on how to put all the pieces of their life together — faith, work, family life, friendships — so that their faith and daily life become tightly interwoven. This is done through one-on-one coaching plus small

groups (classes, retreats, conferences). The group will also bring coaching to where you are: office, campus, restaurant or home.

The results of the coaching would be that life makes more sense and everything contributes to the goal of a good, happy person on this earth and a saint in heaven.

Dolan said the organization, whose name is Latin for “the work of God,” had emerged unscathed from the controversy sparked two years ago by Dan Brown’s fictional book *The Da Vinci Code*, which was later turned into a film of the same name. The book and film portrayed Opus Dei as a controversial and secretive group that forces people to follow a strict and little known Catholic doctrine that left them without much personal freedom.

This portrayal was followed by newspaper stories and television

documentaries depicting Opus Dei as a dysfunctional group. All this negative publicity could have destroyed many organizations, but Dolan said instead it helped Opus Dei.

“Suddenly our organization was out in the open and a way to communicate our operations and goals was opened for us because people wanted to know who we are and what we do. We had to explain and people have understood,” said Dolan.

Before the premiere of the film version of The Da Vinci Code last year, Dolan went around Canada dispelling to the media and other groups the misconceptions of the movie about Opus Dei and what it stands for.

By Innocent Madawo, Catholic
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