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Sixty Years Later

In 2002 in Warsaw, on June 26th, Irene Kalpas met Opus Dei "by chance." She was almost 90 years old.

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By chance I found myself on Filtrova Street in Warsaw, where I had lived during the war, from September 1939 to November 1944. I was standing in front of my family home. In this house, I, with my mother, my father and my aunt (the owner), had been seized by the Nazis and then sent away to the concentration

camps. My aunt died in the Ravensbrück camp and my father in Oranienburg. I returned from Oranienburg with just my mother. In the meantime, our house had been confiscated. Since that time I had never returned to Filtrova Street. I tried to avoid it because it held too many painful memories. . . .

On this 26th of June I entered Filtrova Street from the side of Nautowich Square. I walked and walked. I do not why; I still cannot explain it. And so I came to our house, 27 Filtrova Street. Standing outside I could see that everything was well kept and that the garden and the bright, pretty entrance had been restored. I said to myself, "O my God, the garage is just as it was before." And I asked myself, "How is the garden behind the house?" I put my hand on the latch of the gate, although I should say that I am not one of those people who will enter

just anywhere and start looking around. I pressed down the latch and entered the garden to see if it was the same. It was as if I was doing all this without being aware of it. Then I thought, "There may be a dog," and I went back a few steps.

Then I noticed that the steps were placed in a different way and that the doorstep had also been changed. I went up the steps and there was a doorbell. I don't know why, but I pushed the bell. The door opened, and a young man with a pleasant appearance came out. I think he had glasses. I was very struck and he said, "Can I help you"? I answered that I just wanted to see the garden and he invited me to enter it. I said that in this place there had been a terrace. He looked surprised and I told him that this had been my family home where I had lived during the war. He let me enter the house and I found myself in the

entrance hall. I hardly recognized anything. I went down a hallway that had led to the old living room, the room where we had been detained in 1944. The living room, however, had disappeared and now there was a chapel. In the chapel a priest was praying and he smiled when he saw me. I said good-bye politely and left. I had too many things swirling around in my head.

It turns out that in that house, fifty years later, there was a center of Opus Dei. I knew nothing about Opus Dei nor about its founder. Why had I gone there? From that moment, which I was not looking for at all, I began to get to know Opus Dei. And great changes began to take place, especially in my interior life. Now I am a supernumerary of Opus Dei, and I am enormously thankful to God and to St. Josemaria that he has chosen me, an unknown person who did not deserve it.

I speak about this because I have just turned ninety and I wish to say to all older people who are sick or discouraged with life that there are no limits and no one knows when God's grace might touch us. Naturally I lived with God from the beginning, that is, from the moment of Baptism. But all my life, even with God, I was lukewarm. Now my interior life has begun to be more intense and I try to deepen it everyday. And so I thank God with my whole heart that at the end of my life he has allowed me to begin something new that is worthwhile.
