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75th Anniversary of Opus Dei in Ireland

José Ramón Madurga arrived in Dublin on 4 October 1947 to begin Opus Dei activities in Ireland.

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75 years ago today, on 4 October 1947, a young Spanish engineer stepped off the ferry at Dun Laoghaire port, just outside Dublin City, to begin Opus Dei activities in Ireland.

His name was José Ramón Madurga, and he had registered for a postgraduate degree in mechanical engineering at University College Dublin, the institution founded by St John Henry Newman.

By then, Opus Dei had started in the main Spanish cities, and Saint Josemaría Escrivá wished it to begin in other countries. He asked José Ramón to go to Ireland.

On his way to Dublin, he passed through London, where two days earlier he had celebrated the anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei with the few members of the Work who had started activities in England the year before.

On arrival in Dublin, José Ramón got involved in university life, joining sports clubs and societies. He took up rowing, joined the famous Literary & Historical debating society, and the Spanish Society.

At his first meeting of the Spanish Society, a new auditor was being elected for the new academic year. The outgoing auditor was a recent law and humanities graduate, Cormac Burke, who had studied Spanish as part of his humanities degree which he had taken simultaneously with his legal studies.

And so, José Ramón met Cormac. It was in every sense a historic encounter, leading as it did, within a matter of a few months, to Cormac becoming the first Irish person to join Opus Dei. Nora Burke, Cormac's sister, also got to know Opus Dei and felt that she too had a vocation to strive for holiness in everyday life. She also joined, becoming the first female member of Opus Dei in the country.

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