

Opus Dei in Ireland

Opus Dei is a Catholic institution working in more than 60 countries around the world. It has been in Ireland since 1947.

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Opus Dei began in Ireland in 1947. St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, always had a special affection for Ireland. Blessed Alvaro del Portillo (St. Josemaría's successor as Prelate of Opus Dei) recalled, some years after St. Josemaría's passing, how he prayed for Ireland a lot

during the time of the Easter Rising: “He read in the papers about your struggle for the faith and for the freedom of your country. How much he prayed for you!”

In 1947 Saint Josemaría asked a young Spanish member of ‘The Work’, José Ramón Madurga, if he would like to move to Ireland to spread the message of Opus Dei. José Ramón agreed to move here and began to study at University College Dublin, where he met Cormac Burke from Sligo, who was studying modern languages. On getting to know the lay spirituality of Opus Dei, Cormac decided to ask for admission. He was ordained some years later. 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.

José Ramon and Cormac set about establishing the first apostolic initiative of Opus Dei in Ireland, Nullamore University Residence in Dublin. The student residence was set up with the aim of helping young people develop their personal and academic talents and to help students see these talents as a means of serving their families, friends and society as a whole. The official opening in 1954 was attended by the Taoiseach of the time, John A Costello; the Leader of the Opposition, Eamon de Valera; the President of UCD, Professor Michael Tierney; the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alfie Byrne; and the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr John Charles McQuaid. Other halls of residence were set up later in Dublin, Galway and Limerick.

St. Josemaría spent a few days in Ireland in 1959 - from 15 to 19 August - encouraging those who had

joined Opus Dei and those who were taking part in its formational activities. He spent time in Galway, and also visited Cashel and Cahir, where a plaque was erected in the market square in August 2009 to mark the 50th anniversary of the occasion.

Nearly seven decades later the work of Opus Dei in Ireland (North and South) and the number of people it serves has grown greatly, including young and old, married and single, catholic and non-Catholic of all walks of life, with the aim of helping each individual to become holy in their everyday life.

In 2008, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin entrusted the parish of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Merrion Road, Dublin, to priests of the Opus Dei Prelature.

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