

# Michael Adams (1937-2009)

An obituary published in "The Irish News" for Michael Adams, the founder of Four Courts Press and a long-time member of Opus Dei.

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*Lives remembered: Idealist who changed scholarship in Ireland*

## MICHAEL ADAMS

Fermanagh man Michael Adams changed the face of scholarship in

Ireland through his publishing company, Four Courts Press.

Born in June 1937, the eldest son of Francis and Mary of Breandrum, Enniskillen, he attended St Michael's College and studied economics at Queen's University Belfast where he later gained a doctorate.

A member of Opus Dei for more than 50 years, at his funeral Mgr Robert Bucciarelli, Opus Dei's Vicar for Ireland, said of him: "Michael was constant and devout in all he did.

"He sanctified his work by doing it well, and he sanctified himself in his work by his spiritual life. To his friends he could open up horizons for their work and family that are only visible from a perspective of faith."

Mr Adams began working in publishing in the 1960s with Scepter Press in Dublin and later with Irish

University Press. When it went into receivership in 1984, with some investors he bought its stock and set up Irish Academic Press.

He had established Four Courts Press in 1970 to publish books on religion but by 1995 its range of titles had grown to such an extent that he decided to devote all his energies to it.

In 2005 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Letters by Trinity College Dublin for his contribution to academic learning. The citation read: "It is impossible to imagine the intellectual life of Ireland without Four Courts Press, our most prestigious academic publisher".

A tribute to him in *Books Ireland* (February 2006) also touched on his faith: "It is unfashionable to comment on people's personal faith and religion but no tribute to Michael Adams could be complete

without remarking on his devotion to 'God's Work' in the Opus Dei Prelature, a largely lay organisation.

"His translation from Spanish of 20 volumes of scholarly scriptural exegesis for the Navarre Bible helped to entrench solid theology against the erratic attacks of malcontents."

Michael Adams was an idealist. In 1963 he ran all the way from Eyre Square to Salthill in Galway alongside President Kennedy's motorcade.

He took part in 'ban the bomb' and other protests, and wrote his own books on the Christian life, *The Hard Life* (1977) and *Singleminded* (1979). His idealism, above all, brought him to action, in his working, social and political interests.

Louis Dupré once claimed that religion is something that integrates all other aspects of existence: "if it

isn't somehow everything, it is nothing".

In many ways that reflects the spirit of Opus Dei which Michael Adams was trying to practise: finding God in ordinary life, work, family and friends, without making a fuss about it.

Mr Adams (71), who died on February 13 in St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin, is survived by his brother Julian and sister Gretchen who are both married and living in Canada.

Paul Harman

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