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Guadalupe Ortiz: Doctor in Chemical Sciences, Humanity and Holiness

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Dr. Ortiz was born on December 12, 1916, on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. As was the tradition, she was baptized with the name

corresponding to this Marian feast day and was offered to Mary's maternal protection. She was the fourth child after three brothers — Manuel, Eduardo and Francisco — and her birth filled her parents with joy. Her father was Manuel Ortiz y García, captain of the artillery, and her mother was Eulogia Fernández-Heredia y Gastañaga. The great joy at the birth of Guadalupe, or "Lupe" as they called her affectionately, was soon clouded over by the death of little Francisco, her older brother who was only two years old.

Manuel Ortiz' profession imbued the family with a military atmosphere. He had many qualities which, while not exclusive to the military, are cultivated in the military to a high degree, such as strength, austerity, respect for the truth, intellectual discipline, capacity for decision, moral values, a sense of responsibility in both commanding

and obeying, talent, love of study, solidarity, culture, and a zeal for service.

Manuel's work resulted in many transfers for the family, due to promotions or changes in assignments, and these vicissitudes marked a life interwoven with events unfolding in Spain at that time… Guadalupe began high school in Tetuán at the school of Our Lady of Pilar run by the Marianists. She was the only girl in her class, making a strong impression on her classmates with her personality and by her outstanding grades. She finished high school in the Miguel de Cervantes Institute in Madrid, and received the highest marks. Her family moved there because her father had been promoted to lieutenant colonel and had been given a new assignment.

In 1933 she finished high school, and in October of the same year, she began her university studies in Chemical Sciences. She had to stop her studies because of the Civil War, which would bring her family much suffering: her father Manuel was executed on September 8, 1936, at the Model Prison of Madrid. Amidst these distressing circumstances, she finished her degree as soon as the war ended. She began to develop her teaching career in schools run by Irish religious and in the French Lyceum.

From her family, Guadalupe had absorbed by osmosis the faith and moral virtues that she cultivated throughout her life. Both in her personal contact and in her role as teacher of scientific knowledge, she transmitted her faith and virtues. For this reason, when she met Fr. Josemaría Escrivá in 1944, the founding priest of Opus Dei found

that the seed of his message fell on well-prepared soil…

When Guadalupe received this message, she also found the vital force of her vocation, which she would nourish day by day with the hope and joy captured in that luminous first point of *The Way* by St. Josemaria: “Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Make yourself felt. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love.” Guadalupe requested admission to Opus Dei this same year, 1944..

To use her time to the fullest, she enrolled in a doctorate program of Chemical Sciences. This allowed her to meet more people and showcased her best qualities as a student and a professional. It also showed that she wanted to work in the development of her country…

After several years spent helping Opus Dei get started in Mexico,

Guadalupe returned to Spain and resumed teaching and research in chemistry, concerned about updating her scientific knowledge in both areas. She was hired as a chemistry teacher for two classes at the Ramiro de Maeztu Secondary School, Following this, she was appointed Associate Professor of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at the School of Industrial Mastery in Madrid.

One of her friends was Piedad de la Cierva Viudes, a Ph.D. in Chemical Sciences and the first woman to work at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC — Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas). Piedad was also the director of the Chemistry Section of the Laboratory and Research Workshop of the General Staff of the Navy (LTIEMA). With Piedad, Guadalupe started a line of research for her doctoral thesis on refractory insulators, which

were of great industrial interest. After reading everything published in the subject and sorting hundreds of notecards, she focused her research on the refractory value of the ashes of rice husks.

Guadalupe verified her findings against research from top laboratories such as the the Nuclear Energy Board and various research centers in Valencia, Barcelona, and Bilbao. She defended her novel thesis on July 8, 1965, which was rated with an outstanding cum laude, and won the Juan de la Cierva research prize. The press commented on the novelty and importance of the practical applications of her research for increasing energy savings and maximizing the utility of recyclable materials.

In 1968 she won the position of full professor of the School of Industrial Mastey, but her activity was not

limited to teaching and research. That very year, she helped found an innovative School of Domestic Sciences, similar to what was called “Home Economics” in the United States at that time. In 1972, with its high quality curriculum, the school was renamed the Center for Study and Research of Domestic Sciences. This was the origin of the Nutrition and Dietetics degree in the Faculty of Sciences in the University of Navarre.

Guadalupe was appointed deputy director and professor of Textiles, conducting a thorough study of the material composition of each fabric and devising a method of analyzing the fibers to define their behavior in use, washing and ironing. She presented a paper with her findings in the first Symposium on Textiles in the Modern Home, held in Valencia in January 1973, which was received with great interest by textile

industrialists, architects and decorators. At the end of the Symposium, she was named a member of the International Committee of Rayon and Synthetic Fibers (CIRFS), who awarded her a bronze medal.

However, at around the same time, Guadalupe's heart failure was becoming more serious. She coughed and choked frequently, and so in April 1975, she asked for permission to stop giving classes. She commented, "I have to be happy, because it's good to recognize that one's work is not irreplaceable, and I need to let the doctors do their work." Her health took a sharp turn for the worse, and her doctors decided to take the great risk of surgical intervention. She was admitted to Clinic of the University of Navarre on June 1. While undergoing observation and pre-operative analysis, Guadalupe was not idle.

With proverbial industriousness and fortitude, she dedicated her efforts to the final revisions of her book on the chemistry of detergents, which had sold out in its first edition.

The operation finally took place on July 1. The surgeons repaired two valves (mitral and aortic), and placed a ring on the tricuspid valve, with apparently satisfactory results. Following the requests of numerous friends, Guadalupe dedicated her postoperative days to writing her memoirs and faithfully following the daily plan of prayers and contemplation — known within Opus Dei as “the norms” or one’s “plan of life” — in the midst of her circumstances. She lived them with supernatural joy, knowing that sadness is sterile, fruitless. But on day 15 after the operation, she suffered a grave relapse, and went into a coma that night. The doctors tried to revive her in a last effort, but

she went into definitive cardiac arrest. and her human and spiritual parabola ends up in the arms of Mary. It was 6:30 am on July 16, the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Guadalupe was a doctor in chemistry and humanity...and in holiness as well? Her process of canonization has been opened to study this, and was formally opened on November 18, 2001, with Cardinal-Archbishop Antonio María Rouco of Madrid presiding. He emphasized, "We are presented with a Christian life of great appeal and great depth. In the midst of simplicity, which was not simply a matter of public appearance, there is a human life with a rich trajectory, with decisive features and moments, such as her encounter with the founder of Opus Dei, Josemaría Escrivá, which would open the path of her secular vocation to be a contemplative in the midst of the world, who lived fully, working to

the best of her abilities, with a vocation to holiness."

The Postulator of the Cause, Rev. Benito Badrinas, affirmed: "Now that John Paul II wishes to show models of holiness that are closer to our own time, we consider how Guadalupe presents a lovable model close at hand. She was an indefatigable worker who confronted the problems of her time in a Christian way. She cared for the educational and spiritual needs of those around her, always with a friendly touch. In everything, her reasons for acting were love for God and neighbor."

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