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# **In Colombia: Online Apostolate During the Pandemic**

Although forced to shift to virtual means when the pandemic struck, the means of formation have multiplied, with more people than ever taking part.

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By Guillermo Romero

Ibague is the capital of the state of Tolima, in the Andean region of center-west Colombia. It enjoys a

temperate climate, lush vegetation, and a sky whose deep blue offsets the surrounding green mountains. It is a city of hard-working people dedicated to the development of the country.

For the last several years, some faithful of Opus Dei have also been working apostolically there. Every month they travel from Bogota to meet with many people anxious to grow in their spiritual life and to take part in the monthly days of recollection.

Monsignor Miguel Fernando Gonzalez, the present apostolic administrator of the city, also assists their efforts by providing spiritual attention and catechesis. The gatherings are usually held in a meeting room of the Maria Reina del Vergel parish, attended by business men, students, lawyers, musicians, managers, journalists, salesmen, and

many others who seek only to strengthen their faith and deepen in their knowledge of it.

Over the past several years, those coming to the talks of formation have included Santiago, Cesar, Carlos, Jairo, Armando, Eduardo, Fernando, Néstor, and many others who also invite their friends, following the advice of Saint Josemaria in *The Way*: “God sends the vocations of apostles. But you shouldn’t stop using the means: prayer, mortification, study or work, friendship, supernatural outlook...interior life!”

Due to the pandemic, which led to a lockdown last year, we had to be creative in finding new ways to stay in contact with all these new friends. By means of these online networks we have continued having the doctrinal talks, circles of spiritual formation, or simply sharing news with one another, to find out how

people are getting along and what new plans they have. Paradoxically, during the quarantine there was more apostolic activity than ever, and the talks of formation went from monthly to weekly.

## **Isidoro's example**

In striving to overcome the obstacles presented by the pandemic, we have found it helpful to remember the example of Venerable Isidoro Zorzano, one of the first faithful of Opus Dei, who found many inventive ways to continue the apostolic work in the midst of the Spanish Civil War. Amid the fierce religious persecution and widespread scarcity, he used his status as an Argentinian citizen to bring food and carry letters or messages to the members of Opus Dei who were forced into hiding, or who were in prison or sick.

He was also concerned that they all continue receiving spiritual

formation during those very difficult times. Blessed Alvaro del Portillo recounted that, when some of the early members of Opus Dei were forced to spend several months in hiding in the Honduran Legation, “the Father [Saint Josemaria] preached a meditation to us every day, morning and afternoon. One of us, when we finished the half hour of prayer, recomposed it in writing. He tried to reproduce as well as possible the words and style of the Father. And when Isidoro came by, he took with him the written meditations to share them with others in the Work who were free to move around Madrid.” According to the narrative of Jose Miguel Pero-Sanz, Isidoro brought these texts to Vicente Rodriguez Casado in the Legation of Norway. Vicente remembers that “we found some privacy in the garage and did our prayer there with what the Father had said when he gave the meditation.”

Venerable Isidoro continues being a source of inspiration in this time of the pandemic for those trying to reach the many people anxiously awaiting words of encouragement and the Gospel message.

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