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Carlos Martinez: Fish Seller

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Carlos Martinez, raised in extreme poverty, was an active member of the Communist Youth before the Spanish Civil War. He worked in a fish shop. After converting to Catholicism and joining Opus Dei, he dedicated much of his energy to improving the lives of local Romani (gypsies) and coal miners.

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This sketch of Carlos Martinez is from John Coverdale's book and podcast "Encounters: Finding God in All Walks of Life." *Encounters* presents profiles of people living Saint Josemaria's message of finding God in everyday life.

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Carlos Martinez's father was a shoemaker and his mother sold fruit at an open-air stand in Oviedo, the provincial capital of Asturias, in northeastern Spain. Often the family didn't have enough money to buy even bread, and their meals would consist entirely of spoiled or

damaged fruit that his mother had not been able to sell.

Early Life

Poverty forced Carlos to leave school at age nine and begin working at a fish store. At about the same time, he started to steal parts from the railroad and sell them to a scrap iron dealer. He joined the youth group of the Communist Party, and after work he sold the Communist newspaper in bars.

His father died in 1934, when Carlos was fourteen, and was buried in a common grave. That same year, Carlos enthusiastically greeted the revolutionary movement that swept through his hometown and the surrounding area. When the government crushed it with brutal force, he felt like “a loser.” *Once more, he thought, we poor people continue to be crushed under the boot of oppression.*

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, army units that supported General Franco's revolt against the government occupied Carlos's hometown of Oviedo. They called themselves "Nationalists," but Carlos considered them fascists. For four months, left-wing Republican militia groups mostly made up of miners besieged the city in an effort to expel Franco's forces. Food and other supplies were very scarce, and aerial and artillery bombardments were frequent. Finally, in October Franco's troops defeated the Republican forces.

A few months later, Carlos and his older brother fled from Oviedo to the nearby city of Gijon, which was still controlled by Republican forces. Because he was only sixteen, Carlos failed in his attempts to enlist in the Republican Army, but his older brother succeeded. Their younger brother, who had stayed home with

his mother, was shot by Franco's forces for refusing to reveal where his two older brothers were. In the fall of 1937, Carlos returned home after the collapse of the Republican forces in Gijon and the rest of the surrounding region. Although he was only seventeen years of age, he was arrested and sentenced to eighteen years in prison.

After the war ended in 1939, Carlos was offered the possibility of reducing his sentence by two days for each day he would work, but he refused to cooperate with his captors. In prison, he read, took classes, and developed an interest in literature. He was, in his own words:

a fairly quiet young man who walked back and forth in the prison patio wrapped up in my own concerns. I couldn't find answers to the many questions my life raised. I saw the events that ended up with me in

prison as if they did not affect me. My conclusion was always the same: the poor are left wing and the rich right wing. They are in charge for the moment. I need to keep quiet.

At this stage of his life, Carlos rejected religion, which he saw “as something for rich people, who were now the victors.”

As part of an amnesty that covered many people, Carlos was set free in August 1941. Once back home in Oviedo, he recalls:

I thought a lot about my brother who had been executed because he refused to betray us. Things were made worse by the fact that I didn't know where his body had ended up. In some strange way, my heart pardoned. I don't know why. Perhaps it was a grace from the God whom I barely knew, but the fact is that hatred didn't find a place in my heart.

Carlos found work in a fish store. After hours, he began to write short stories. The father of a friend was impressed by them and urged him to go to Madrid and try to begin a literary career. In Madrid, Carlos supported himself by working in a fish store. Although he was able to meet some major literary figures, he could not gain a foothold in the literary world and decided to return home to Oviedo. There his left-wing past and prison sentence caused him many problems. He had to report every week to a political commissar of the Franco regime. People often confused him with another Carlos Martinez who had spoken at Marxist meetings in 1929. In vain, Carlos protested that he was only nine years old at the time.

One day in 1945, Carlos came across a recruiter for the Spanish Foreign Legion. The Legion asked no questions about the political or

criminal past of recruits, and serving in the Foreign Legion would erase the past. Once you were discharged, you were no longer who you had been before enlisting, but simply a veteran of the Legion. Carlos enlisted without hesitation. Despite the harshness of the discipline, Carlos identified with the spirit of the Legion, which seemed to him “a poem of toughness and manly spirit.” He was moved by its warlike maxims such as, “A legionary will never say he is tired till he drops exhausted.”

Back in Oviedo

Carlos was discharged from the Legion at twenty-eight and returned to Oviedo. Once again, he found work in a fish store and began to dedicate much of his spare time to writing. In 1951, he began dating a seventeen-year-old girl named Ester. She was the daughter of the owner of the fish store where he had worked

immediately following his release from prison. After a while, Ester's father asked him to stop seeing her because she was still very young. This posed a great conflict for Carlos because he was in love with Ester but had great respect and affection for her father, to whom he felt deeply indebted. He stopped seeing Ester for a time but was so disturbed he had to spend several days in bed.

Ester's father had brought Carlos to a meeting of HOAC, the working-class branch of Catholic action. He liked what he saw, returned several times, and finally joined the organization. Carlos was deeply concerned about the poor, prisoners, and the sick. In the early 1950s, he visited them frequently. He was especially diligent in visiting political prisoners despite the difficulties this caused him. Carlos recalls his visits:

I tried to take care of them as I would have liked someone to do for me during my years of solitude and isolation in prison. I tried to accompany them, share their concerns, and encourage them to take advantage of the time they had to read or study. I also tried to cheer them up, encouraging them to be concerned about others and giving them hope of getting out soon.

They waited for me anxiously, perhaps thinking about the time we would spend talking and about the small gifts that I used to bring them: cigarettes, books, and a little bit of money to buy coffee. My visits and the company I was able to give them improved their spirits and behavior. This led the guards to treat them better and to be well-disposed toward me.

When, for whatever reason, I was unable to visit them, I sent them

cigarettes and money through someone who was quite well known in Oviedo, a former prison inmate who worked as a shoeshine boy and whom people called “the bullfighter” or “the legionary,” because of how long he had spent serving in the Legion, where we had met. He was already old and lived alone because he had no family. I tried to help him, paying his rent, and giving him some fish when the store was closing Saturday afternoons.

At this time, many people from the impoverished southern parts of Spain were emigrating to the better-off northern areas, including the area around Oviedo. Shantytowns of improvised shacks without running water, electricity, or sanitation sprung up. One day, Carlos stumbled across an unusually poor shantytown occupied by Romani (or Gypsies, as many people called them at the time). They were almost all illiterate

and lived on the margins of society. The Spanish police contributed to their marginalization by controlling their movements and denying them access to many areas. Carlos, moved by their desperate poverty, began to take an interest in helping them. He recalls: “I began to do things, and I gradually acquired what I could for them: food, clothing, medicines, etc. Little by little, they began to accept me. I spoke with a businessman from the area and asked him to give me some space in a warehouse where I could organize classes for the Gypsy children. Surprisingly, he accepted.”

A Dramatic Change in Life

A major turning point in Carlos's life came in June 1954. He was trying to decide whether to propose to Ester despite her father's opposition or to break off their relationship altogether in deference to her father. He entered a church late one

afternoon and looked at a statue of Our Lady.

I began to pray and think about my life, and what I should do with it. I was moved. Suddenly, I found myself crying. I only recall two other occasions on which I cried. In both, I did it in the same way, without sobbing. It's the same effect as when a few drops fall into a glass that is already full of water: All the pain flows in silent tears.

I spoke with great emotion to the Virgin. I told her about my problems. I had written them out in two letters which I had in my pocket. They were both written to the same person, Ester Moyano. I continued to be in love with her and I couldn't bring myself to accept her father's opposition. At the same time, I could not see going against his wishes, especially since I owed him so much gratitude. That's why I had written

two letters. In one I proposed marriage. In the other, I cut completely with her.

During this period of prayer, I felt consolation and deep peace. The problems continued to be there, but now I saw them with a vision full of hope, and I felt a relief that occupied the place of my anguish. I understood that the Most Holy Virgin was carrying me toward her Son. And I said to him, “How many years, Lord, without recognizing you. It is because I didn’t see, Jesus.”

Immediately, almost without time for my tears of pain and hope to dry, I begged our Lord to put me on a path of reparation, love, and self-giving. I didn’t say it to him in those words, because at that time I didn’t really know what they meant. But the Lord read my heart. How quickly he answered my prayer. When I left the church, outside in the street, I took

the two letters out of my pocket and gave them their definitive destination. I put in the mail the letter breaking off relations, and I tore up the other. Ester understood my attitude.

From that day on I went daily to that church to see Our Lady. . . . I sat quietly in front of her, looking at her, without saying anything. I had written a letter to Heaven, and I was waiting for a response. God wanted something from me, but I did not know exactly what it was. I needed my life to have a clear sense, and I was sure that Our Lady would make me know what it was.

I don't know how many days I went to see her, to talk with her. One of those days, the idea of going to Confession came to me. I had become accustomed to being receptive to the things that occurred to me because I saw that they were things from God.

So, I decided to go to Confession. I went to the church and knelt down in a confessional.

“Father, I have not been to confession since my first Communion.” I told him that I had been in jail, had been a Communist, and continued to be one. That priest must have been perplexed because he refused to give me absolution. Sometime later, I learned that communism meant denying faith in the church and was incompatible with Christian life. But at that time, I didn’t know anything about all that.

I recalled that in the HOAC I had met a priest, Fr. Rosendo, and I went to him. He knew me well and had no problem in granting me absolution.

Later, Carlos wrote a more intimate and penetrating recollection of some of these events:

How long were you there? You don't know. But when you finally left you felt your cheeks tight and your eyes burning. From that day on, every day you visited that image of Our Lady, staying there a long time, seated in the semi-darkness, in front of her.

You were comfortable there and you felt an almost physical sensation that something oppressive and painful was leaving you. You were finding yourself. . . . Your breast awoke to a miracle of tenderness. A few days earlier, you felt old, tired, and without hope. But that day, do you remember? Something began to tell you that living was worthwhile. You told the Mother of God your story once and again. Repeating past things under her affectionate gaze, you came to discover, in what was a true revelation, something that today seems very simple: the influence of God in everything that was happening. Yes, of that God that you

forgot shortly after your first Communion, almost certainly by nine years of age when you began to work.

Joining Opus Dei

This interior conversion did not lead to any dramatic external change in Carlos's life. He continued working in the fish shop, reading, writing, and helping the Romani. It was precisely while he was trying to teach an older Romani how to read that a young man, who had also been trying to help the Romani, came up and said that he would like to talk with him. The young man told him that he belonged to Opus Dei. He explained that:

Opus Dei was made up of men and women, both married and single, who search for holiness in ordinary life, in their work, each one in his place. He said that it had been born in Spain in 1928 but that its calling

was universal, and that it had already spread to several countries in Europe and America.

I listened to him attentively. Everything he was saying seemed to me new and marvelous. He told me that the members of Opus Dei continued to be what they had been before: teachers, doctors, miners . . . or fishermen. He said that each one lived in the place and circumstances in which God had put him.

When he finished, I was assailed by the recollection of my prayer in the church, and of the letter that I had written to Heaven. This was the response that I was waiting for. I saw the hand of God behind very ordinary events, that for others may have been simple coincidences, but not for me.

Those thoughts of mine, while I listened to that young man whom I had just met, completely demolished

all my plans for the future. . . . With this encounter, Lord, you answered in a tangible way my petition of wanting to love you above all things!

That was my first conversation with José García Monge, who was a couple of years younger than me. That day he entered my life and became a friend forever. With the fire that an ideal gives when one embraces it without limitation, he talked to me about an adventure that I could take part in and which from the beginning was very attractive. I think this was my first real encounter with Jesus Christ.

Carlos visited the Opus Dei center in Oviedo and talked with both the chaplain and the director of the center. On his first visit, Carlos came to understand “that Opus Dei is a family. A family of supernatural bonds, but a real family. They treated me with an affection which I have

been short of all my life.” The director was impressed with Carlos. He noticed in him the effects of a hard life as a fish seller, a prisoner, and a legionnaire. But above all, he saw that he was a good man. He was impressed by Carlos’s ability to share the pain and suffering of others. He saw, he says, that Carlos had a “great soul.” Carlos began to receive spiritual direction as well as religious instruction.

“ ‘Let it be done,’ ” Carlos recalls, “was my response and, leaving everything behind, I asked to be admitted as an associate member of Opus Dei.” At first, everything about life as a member of the Work was easy, almost effortless. Years later, Carlos asked himself:

How could I describe those first times of following up on my conversion and giving myself to Opus Dei? They all seem so far away!

There were no shadows, no hesitations, no difficulties to darken, detain, or obstruct me as I walked down this new path. In the words of the Founder of Opus Dei, “the divine paths of the earth had been opened up.” How good our Lord is! In those days I was like a little child in the interior life. I would not have persevered if trials for my generosity or occasions to demonstrate that my love was above any attack of the enemy had come in the form of temptations or trials.

Of course, things were not always easy, and later Carlos had his struggles:

How often nonetheless, this security was troubled, even broken, by the old man! How often you forgot what God did for you and the ardent promises of eternal fidelity that you made to Him! Do you remember how often, in a groan whose source you

yourself did not know, you said to Him: “No, I cannot. I cannot. I want to live my own life.”

You came back to reality and, asking pardon from the Lord, you returned with more intensity to your plan of spiritual life, put more effort into your apostolate, and had greater joy in encountering setbacks.

Time went by and a vague idea settled into my soul that Jesus loved me less, and that the goal of sanctity was each day further away. In reality, that was not true. In the moments in which the Lord made me see this, my heart was filled with thankfulness and a lacerating desire to be faithful.

His Own Fish Store

With the encouragement of the director of the Opus Dei center in Oviedo and other friends, Carlos decided to start a fish shop of his own in the best part of the city's

market, even though there were already other fish shops there. Not surprisingly, when he went to get the necessary permits from the city, he ran into opposition from the owners of the existing shops. At about this time, however, the city threatened to shut down one of the shops for failure to meet sanitary standards. Carlos quietly worked behind the scenes so that the city would give his future competitor an extension of time in which to correct the conditions. When the man learned what Carlos had done, he withdrew his opposition and begged Carlos's pardon. The two became friends, and the competitor returned to religious practice.

Eventually, Carlos got the necessary permits and scraped together the money needed to rent a store. The previous occupant had been a sewing goods store that had gone out of business, and Carlos's lease

required him to purchase the remaining stock of that store. So, for some months, in addition to fish, Carlos found himself selling thread and buttons.

Carlos understood well that “Opus Dei does not take you out of your place. Quite the contrary, it helps you to see how to take better natural and supernatural advantage of the place in which the Lord has placed you.”

When he speaks about taking “supernatural advantage,” he means trying to sanctify his work and to sanctify himself in his work by doing it carefully for the love of God, thereby turning it into prayer. “I was a fishmonger, and this profession was the hinge of my vocation and the material I had to sanctify, so I worked at it more carefully.”

Gradually, Carlos learned to be aware of God’s presence throughout the day and to offer up his work and its demands.

You have to get up very early and walk several kilometers to go look for fish at the wholesale market. There are frequent changes in temperature, in the old days with ice and later going in and out of the refrigerators. You have to lift heavy weights and remove the scales and cut and clean the fish with sharp instruments that require a great deal of attention and can easily cut you. You have to spend many hours standing. These are things that I have had to do my whole life long, but since God gave me a vocation to Opus Dei, I learned to offer them as reparation for my sins and those of the whole world.

Taking supernatural advantage of work also meant finding ways to bring other people closer to God through his work. In the store, Carlos had a nativity scene which he kept up year-round. In addition to the traditional figures, it had members of the Spanish Foreign Legion and the

Civil Guard. Carlos also had some shelves with spiritual reading pamphlets and books which he sold to customers. In a fish shop, Carlos said, “you talk a lot with the clients about the fish and the best way to prepare it. I told them everything I knew.” But his conversation was not limited to fish and how to prepare it. “I talked about my life and my way of thinking while I cut up and cleaned the fish.”

The people he saw most frequently and interacted with most intensely were, of course, his employees. He was a demanding employer but showed concern for his employees’ material and spiritual needs. Over the course of the years, a number of them and some of their family members received the grace of a vocation to Opus Dei. This was largely thanks to Carlos’s conversations with them and his prayers for them.

Working with Romani

Helped by several other members of Opus Dei, Carlos continued his efforts to aid the Romani encamped outside of Oviedo. At one point, the civil guards ordered them to move on, probably because of pressure from neighbors. Carlos intervened on their behalf with the commander who had issued the order. After a long conversation, Carlos not only convinced him to allow them to remain but got the commander's son to help look for work for the Romani in local factories. The civil guard sergeant, who had ordered the Romani to move on, accompanied Carlos later that same day to give them the news that they could stay. When the sergeant saw that the room where Carlos gave them classes had no benches or desks, he offered to arrange for a carpenter he knew to make them.

Carlos organized a Romani soccer team and managed to get it admitted to a league, an important step in integrating the Romani into the larger community. With the help of some Opus Dei members as well as other friends, he formed a nonprofit organization called ACUDEL, Cultural and Athletic Association of Lugones, to help the Romani. He convinced some factory owners and other businessmen to hire them. This not only provided them with a steady income but allowed them to obtain the identification papers they lacked.

Gradually, modest houses were built, and eventually, the shacks in which they had been living completely disappeared. Nevertheless, some of the neighbors were unhappy with what Carlos and his friends were doing. There were demonstrations, and on more than one occasion Carlos had to flee from angry neighbors and the Civil Guard.

With the discovery of his vocation to Opus Dei, Carlos's efforts in favor of the Romani took on a new and specifically Christian meaning. One day, one of the Romani asked him to prepare his four children for baptism. Carlos had to teach them the most elementary truths of the faith as well as how to read. Little by little he managed to involve other members of the family and became good friends with them. Soon afterward, another Romani approached him on the street and said he would like to get married and baptize his children. Carlos filed all the necessary paperwork and arranged for the local parish to take care of the ceremonies. This was the beginning, Carlos says, "of many baptisms, marriages, confessions, communions, and last sacraments. Thanks be to God, hundreds of people received the light of the faith and discovered that they too were children of God."

Carlos liked to go with the Romani to the most prominent shrine of the Blessed Virgin in the area, Covadonga:

Entire families went to spend three or four days of prayer, formation, and rest close to our patron. Bringing them closer to the Virgin was fundamental in assuring their Christian life. It was also fundamental to be very open with them and to let them see that they were really loved. This is the only way—for them and for anyone—to recognize the sense of friendship and understand the Christian spirit that we wanted to transmit to them. To go to pray to Our Lady of Covadonga did a great deal of good to them, and to me. As we say in my part of the world, she is so pretty.

Reaching Out to Coal Miners

Oviedo lies just north of Spain's most important coal mining region, where

much of the work was still done by hand. Few mines had adequate safety equipment. Ventilation and measures to control dust were poor, and many miners contracted silicosis at an early age. Almost all were ill-educated. Although baptized, few practiced the faith.

By the late 1950s, the situation of the Romani had greatly improved, and Carlos had created a stable organization to help meet their ongoing needs. He and other members of Opus Dei increasingly turned their attention to the miners, asking themselves what they could do to help improve their social and religious situation. Carlos began making occasional trips to the area, especially ten miles south to the town of Mieres, where he tried to get to know people. He was soon joined by his young nephew, also an associate member of Opus Dei, who worked for Carlos in the fish store.

At first, they traveled by bus, but as their trips became more frequent, the slowness of bus travel became a problem. Carlos purchased a motor scooter, but the cobblestone roads, often slick with rain, proved dangerous. Neither Carlos nor his nephew suffered any serious injuries, but they took so many falls that Carlos eventually decided to buy a small truck that he could also use for his business.

Among the people Carlos got to know in Mieres was a young man who, in addition to working in the mines, was studying for certification as a mine engineering assistant. He soon became an associate of Opus Dei. After a while, Carlos and other members of the Work rented a small apartment in Mieres. At first, it was difficult to attract miners to the apartment and its activities. As Carlos observed, they were “very tough men with many human

virtues,” but they faced a bleak future with the prospect of early illness and death, and little chance to improve their situation. Most were more interested in drinking than in attending talks on cultural and spiritual topics. After a while, however, the first miners began to come, as well as clerks, other workers, and students from the public high school and the School of Mine Engineering Assistants. In addition to talks on cultural and spiritual topics, they also organized a club that sponsored excursions to mountains nearby.

The miners had little in common with the students, clerks, and delivery boys who also came to the apartment. They were significantly older and came from a completely different social milieu. But by 1963, the number of miners coming to activities had grown to the point that Carlos and the other members of

Opus Dei decided to rent a separate apartment for activities with them. Two years later they rented a three-story house with a small soccer field. It was big enough to accommodate activities with miners and other groups without interference.

The Peñavera center offered classes for apprentices and delivery boys so that they could get a certificate of grade school graduation. This allowed them to work legally and be insured by their employers. It also began to offer courses in accounting and a high school course via radio.

In collaboration with a mining company, Peñavera organized courses of professional training for miners. It was difficult to recruit students for the first course. Looking back, Carlos says, “If we managed to put together the first forty students, it was not thanks to our advertising

but to the work of friends and acquaintances.”

Although the vast majority of the classes were technical, there were also some classes on basic education and religion. It was not easy to attract the miners to those subjects. In the first such session, when the speaker said that human beings have a soul, a young man said, “I don’t believe I have a soul.” In a session on criminal law, the speaker asked one of the students at the end of class to sum up what they had learned. “Don’t bother asking me. I know the criminal code backward and forward, by experience.” Despite his youth, he had already been arrested four times.

According to Carlos, “The first days of the course were hard, but then personal contact, the professional quality of the course, friendship, and affection won the confidence of those

tough men. They had little education but big hearts and were generous and good companions.” The student who was convinced he did not have a soul eventually had a heart-to-heart talk with Carlos and told him that he wanted to learn, become a believer, and understand the significance of the Mass.

An important part of the professional program for miners—and of all the programs in Peñavera—was individual mentoring. The mentors were often able to win the confidence of the miners and talk in-depth about their personal situations and attitudes. Thanks to the efforts of the mentors, as well as to activities like weekend workshops and retreats, many of the miners began to frequent the sacraments and some of them became members of Opus Dei. The organizers of the workshops and retreats often invited Carlos to give one of the presentations and tell the

participants something about his life. Carlos was convinced that, “In some way, this helped them understand the mercy and the grandeur of God. They also laughed hearing about some of my adventures.”

In the small towns where most of the miners lived, the sight of men receiving the sacraments caused something of a stir. Carlos remembers one case in particular. “When Andres decided to go to Communion after ten years without setting foot in the church, his neighbors in the town imagined the strangest motives to explain his new attitude. But it didn’t take them long to realize that this was something serious. Many people changed and decided to live their religion intensely.”

Not content with the burgeoning activities in Mieres, Carlos traveled regularly to other towns, where he

met with people wherever he could: a drug store run by a friend, a café, or a bar. He was always ready to go anywhere to talk with anyone he thought he could bring closer to God. On one occasion, a relative of a very bright high school student who lived in Pola de Lena asked Carlos to see the boy. Little by little, the young man began to pray and come closer to God. Quite soon he discovered that God was calling him to give himself completely. Today he is a priest of Opus Dei.

In 1973, Carlos decided to make a fifty-mile pilgrimage on foot to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin in Covadonga. He convinced twenty-three people to accompany him. The group set out under light rain after work on Saturday and reached the shrine at noon on Sunday.

Retirement and Death

In 1985, Carlos reached Spain's mandatory retirement age of sixty-five. He was still in very good health and ran every day, usually with someone else. He also swam frequently in the ocean regardless of the weather. Carlos continued volunteering in Peñavera in the afternoons and evenings, but now he also had the mornings free.

Even before his retirement, Carlos had frequently visited patients in the hospital. Now he began to do so on a systematic basis and as an official volunteer. Three hours a day, six days a week, he visited patients, especially those the staff told him didn't have visitors. He had a great ability to strike up a conversation with anyone and bring the conversation around to spiritual topics. In a short time, if the person wasn't opposed, Carlos spoke to him about the possibility of being reconciled with God. At times the

results were so extraordinary that he was especially aware of the hand of God being present.

Toward the end of his own life, Carlos was hospitalized in a room with two other men. He noticed that the older of the two didn't look very pleased when a priest came to visit. One time, when the man was out of the room, Carlos asked the man's daughter if she would object to him talking to her father about meeting with the priest. She responded that in her sixty years of life, she had never seen her father pray or enter a church. Carlos was not discouraged, and when the man came back to the room, he proposed that the man talk with the priest the next time he came. The man said that he had been separated from the Church for seventy years, but that he didn't mind talking with the priest because he seemed to be a pleasant man, and

he had noticed that when he left Carlos seemed to be especially happy.

After the priest and the old man talked at length, he went to confession and asked to receive Communion. The following day, while the priest was going to the chapel to bring him Communion, the man died suddenly. When Carlos asked his younger roommate if he would like to go to confession, he responded that he would, but not if he would die suddenly as the older man had.

Carlos died in May 2000 at eighty years of age.