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General Information: Opus Dei in the Philippines

A brief account of Opus Dei's history and activities in the Philippines.

11/11/2014

Contact for Activities of Women

<https://opusdei.org/en-ph/document/centers-of-wome...>

Contact for Activities of Men

<https://opusdei.org/en-ph/document/centers-of-men-...>

Social Initiatives and Projects

<https://opusdei.org/en-ph/arti...>

As early as the mid-1940s, the founder of Opus Dei, Josemaría Escrivá, had already been requested by Alberto Balcells, a Spaniard who had settled in the island of Negros, to send people of Opus Dei to the Philippines. At that time, however, Opus Dei was focused on its work of evangelization in Western Europe and the American Continent.

The opportune time came when two young Filipinos, Bernardo Villegas and Jesus Estanislao, returned to the Philippines in 1964 from their studies at Harvard University in the US. While at Harvard, the two of

them attended activities organized by Opus Dei at the Elmbrook University Center, located at the very heart of the campus, and later on joined Opus Dei.

In 1964, the apostolate of Opus Dei started in a small house on C. Ayala Street in Singalong, Manila, close to some colleges where some of the first members of Opus Dei were studying. Bernardo Villegas and Jess Estanislao were joined in late 1964 by two priests from Spain, Fr. José Morales and Fr. Javier de Pedro; and a young engineer, Manila-born José Rivera. By April 1965, the apostolic activities moved to a bigger house in Malate where the Maynilad Study Center became a venue for education and training of both university students and professional men.

In October 1965, Soledad Usechi, Lali Sastre and Maria Teresa Baron arrived from Spain to start the work

of Opus Dei with women. Through the help of Doña Luisa Lorenzo, whom they met in Madrid, a modest house was acquired on Leon Guinto Street in Singalong, Manila. Rina Villegas was the first Filipina student to join Opus Dei in December of that year. When the Mayana School of Home and Fine Arts for women was established in 1966, the apostolic activities with married women and house helpers began. Tanglaw Residence for female students was established in 1967.

The work of evangelization started to spread to other university campuses, especially at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. By that time, two other priests, Fr. José Cremades and Fr. John Portavella, arrived from the United States, to attend to the growing number of students and professionals attending the activities of Opus Dei. To serve the northern

part of Manila, the Banahaw Cultural Center was established in 1967 at a residence on N. Domingo Street in Cubao, Quezon City.

In August 1967, Jesus Estanislao and Bernardo Villegas established a business and economic think tank called the Center for Research and Communication (CRC), which would later on develop into a full-blown university, the University of Asia and the Pacific, in 1995. CRC was an instrument for Opus Dei to carry the Church to the workplace, imparting Catholic teachings to professionals in journalism, law, business, education and other key sectors.

In the mid-1970s, members of Opus Dei encouraged parents to put up schools for their children with the idea of participating further in the evangelizing and sanctifying mission of the Church. The chaplaincy of these schools would be entrusted to

Opus Dei. The first ones were Woodrose School for girls in 1977 and Southridge School for boys in 1979. Since then, more schools organized by parents have been established in Quezon City, Cebu, Iloilo, and Antipolo.

Members of Opus Dei have cooperated with other men and women of good will in trying to apply the social doctrine of the Church, especially the preferential option for the poor. Together they have established training centers for out-of-school youth and rural girls in such areas as hotel and restaurant management, electro-mechanical skills, small scale farming and information technology. These schools - Punlaan School, Anihan School, Banilad School, Dualtech Training Center, Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE), the Dagatan Family Farm School, the Balete Family Farm School, among

others -- have helped thousands of low-income households overcome poverty by giving their children skills that make them very employable and increase their potential to earn.

The expansion of the work of evangelization of Opus Dei outside of Metro Manila started in 1971 when the Makiling Conference Center (a venue for spiritual retreats and classes on Catholic teachings) was built in the city of Calamba, Laguna. The expansion to the provinces continued when the first centers in Cebu opened in 1981, followed by Iloilo, Bacolod, and recently Davao. Apostolic activities are held as well in Angeles City, Tarlac, Baguio, Lipa, Batangas, Legaspi, Tacloban, Cagayan de Oro, General Santos City, and Marbel.

There are approximately 3,000 members of Opus Dei in the Philippines.

The Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in the Philippines is Rev. Fr. Julio Diéguez, with office at 20 Sampaguita Street, New Manila, Quezon City.

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