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# **Opus Dei recollection in Moscow**

MANILA, Philippines - As the personal prelature of Opus Dei prepares to celebrate its 25th year on Nov. 28, Mary Elizabeth Bilgera, cooperator in Moscow, Russia, reported that the first ladies' recollection was held in that city in August.

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Supernumerary Dr. Ma. Teresa of Spain and Gabi Santa Maria of Chile

supervised the recollection. The wife of a Spanish ambassador, Dr. Teresa has been a supernumerary for 35 years.

Elizabeth is married to Roberto Bilgera, operations chief of the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) in Moscow. The only Filipino participant, she became cooperator in 1993.

Moscow has two Opus Dei priests, Fr. Fernando Vera and Father Antonio.

In Moscow, Elizabeth attends Mass every day because her apartment is only a 20-minute walk from the church. The city has only two Catholic churches—St. Louis and the Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Cathedral.

The prelatore

Opus Dei was founded in 1928 and approved by the bishop of Madrid in

1941. In 1982, it was established as a personal prelate of the Catholic church.

Personal prelatures are part of the Church's hierarchical structure, similar to dioceses and approved to carry out specific pastoral missions. Opus Dei's mission is to spread the ideal of holiness for ordinary men and women.

In the Philippines, Opus Dei members have collaborated in applying the social doctrine of the Church, especially the preferential option for the poor. They established training centers for out-of-school youth and rural girls.

Opus Dei has 3,000 members in the Philippines and 85,000 all over the world. St. Josemaria Escriva said, "This life is short. Let's make good use of it." He meant we could fill our lives with God by sanctifying work.

The late Bishop Alvaro Portillo became the first prelate of Opus Dei. The cause of his beatification is being studied.

Josephine Darang // Philippine Daily Inquirer

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