

# **Clarifications and fact-checking of "Opus" by Gareth Gore**

We offer the general public a non-exhaustive document with information and clarifications on Gareth Gore's book. With this document we hope to correct the record and to provide an essential perspective that the author has withheld from readers of the book.

01/13/2025

You can also download  
"Clarifications and fact-checking of  
the book *Opus* by Gareth Gore  
(Simon & Schuster, 2024, 439 pages)"  
as a PDF. It is also available in  
Spanish.

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## ***A necessary premise: respect and truth***

The Opus Dei Communications Office provided Gareth Gore (author of the book *Opus*) with broad cooperation for the preparation of his text. With a desire to be as helpful as possible, we provided him with abundant documents and materials, spent many hours openly answering questions, and arranged numerous interviews. This is what we usually do with other similar requests, even if they come—as in this case—from professionals who are not specialists in ecclesial themes or who are not part of a faith experience. They too deserve our respect.

With the publication of the book in October 2024, we realised that the author had used this collaboration to support a pre-established narrative. He dishonestly distorts real data to build plausibility for his story, while disregarding anything that did not align with his preconceived thesis. In Gore's *Opus* everything is bad and the good becomes bad; the book does not even seek the appearance of objectivity, as can be seen from the first pages in the repeated use of adjectives such as "secret," "dark," "recruit," "dystopian," etc. Not a single good deed by anyone in Opus Dei is recorded; not a single response from Opus Dei is included to the many charges leveled against Opus Dei in the book.

The result is an example of a distorted polemic, which builds verisimilitude from this variety of elements: misrepresented facts, half-truths, statements of unequal value,

errors and lies, unfounded hypotheses from biased or misinterpreted sources, fanciful interpretations.

When we saw the marked bias of the book and its numerous factual errors, those of us who had been in contact with Gareth Gore from the Opus Dei Communications Office decided to prepare a document to offer the readers of this website the complementary explanations that the author often silences. We have tried to separate truth from falsehood; to distinguish truths, half-truths, lies, and judgments and interpretations about intentions; to clarify false narratives by giving context and additional explanations.

In its more than 400 pages, the book compiles criticisms that Opus Dei has received from its foundation in 1928. Many of these issues were addressed in the seventies, eighties and nineties

of the last century, but these explanations of Opus Dei are not easily found on the web. In this sense, this book also offers us the opportunity to make available to all readers those older references, sometimes buried in the paper archives. Going page by page through Gore's book, we wish to make available to the general public the other point of view and numerous factual clarifications.

We offer this document with a necessary premise: respect and openness towards critical views, which can usually be helpful. No human institution is perfect. Opus Dei tries to be receptive and on numerous occasions has acknowledged mistakes and taken responsibility: attending to criticism and analyzing it is part of the task of its government. Being the bearer of a Christian charism does not grant immunity from error. Criticism often

reveals blind spots in one's own performance and is an opportunity for change and improvement.

The people of Opus Dei wish to correct and learn from their mistakes, especially whenever these may have left people feeling hurt. Like other institutions of the Catholic Church, for years we have been following a path of greater awareness of our own weaknesses, which leads to a deeper empathy with wounded people and gives us new sensitivity and light on how to carry out our mission.

For these reasons, we endeavour to listen to and learn from both fair and constructive criticism, as well as criticism that is neither fair nor constructive. Criticism made out of anger or misunderstanding does not cancel out the truth that may be behind it. At the same time, thoughtful discernment means that

not all criticisms end up having the same usefulness, sometimes because they are without factual foundation, sometimes because they are based on narratives that show aversion towards Opus Dei or, more generally, a lack of understanding of the Catholic Church or religious experience.

Here too, where the author of the book shows animosity and a consequent interpretative bias, we nevertheless wanted to listen. Many of Gareth Gore's criticisms reiterate issues from the past, to which Opus Dei has responded at the time, and more current ones to which responses have also been made or where we are in the process of acknowledgement and apology, where appropriate.

A final clarification: the focus here is on issues related to Opus Dei. For many issues related to Banco Popular

or the foundations created by Luis Valls Taberner (another central line of the book) we refer to the abundant information on the website <https://luisvallstaberner.com/en>.

In addition to this premise, the text that the reader has in their hands consists of: a) considerations on the methodology of the book, especially on the one used in the handling of the sources presented in the section "Notes"; b) some examples of verifiable errors and biased interpretations following the order of the chapters.

The authors of this document are grateful for the collaboration of so many people, witnesses of the events reported, who have answered our questions.

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## ***Considerations on the Methodology and Notes***

The book has over a hundred pages of "Notes" (pages 315-423) in which he cites the sources that presumably support his assertions. However, behind this apparent rigour of the notes lies a deliberate strategy: he treats the sources critical of Opus Dei as unquestionable, while carefully omitting anything that would undermine or contradict his thesis. Some of the methodological shortcomings would be:

- *Telling one part of the truth while hiding the other*, distorting the essence of the stories. An example: on p. 157, he writes: "During a trip to Nicaragua, the pope refused to let one cardinal kiss his ring because he had disobeyed a papal order. Millions watched on television as he admonished the priest, reducing him to tears." Gore hides the fact that the

"cardinal" (who was actually a priest whose name was Fr Ernesto Cardenal), was minister of culture in the government of the dictatorship of Daniel Ortega (who is president today), and had been asked by the Vatican to regularise his situation. In this case, the author presents John Paul II as a despot and makes a victim out of Ernesto Cardenal, who in fact had a great deal of power in Nicaragua at the time. The correct thing to do would have been to provide all the facts and allow the reader to make an independent assessment of the actions of both characters, unmediated by his bias.

● *Stating as facts things that did not occur by citing false sources or sources that he manipulates.* For example, falsely stating that Mother Teresa of Calcutta attended the beatification of Saint Josemaría (p. 155). Or to say that Saint Josemaría died shortly before 12 midnight and

that "a call was put through ordering that the numerary servants in the adjoining building be woken up and sent straight to the chapel" (p. 117) when it is well known that he died at midday on 26 June and that, therefore, nobody woke anybody up. Or that at Villa Tevere [Opus Dei's headquarters] "the life of Saint Josemaría is commemorated in a solemn ceremony every day at noon" (p. 14): none of these things actually happened, but the book backs them up with a reference in a footnote.

● *Ignoring or omitting the context.* For example, when St Josemaría applies military vocabulary to the Christian life (he uses it rarely, although Gore mentions it a lot) he continues the tradition of the Old and New Testament (Ephesians 6:10-20), used by other saints such as St Ignatius of Loyola. For example, in a note for page 44, Gore is surprised

that Escrivá uses words like "army" or "militia." Also in popular devotion we find the archangel St Michael, armed with a sword, and Pope Francis encourages us to go to his intercession. Any Catholic reading these terms (though they may sound outdated) would not think that violence and coercion are being encouraged in the name of faith. Gore, however, uses it to "demonstrate" the supposed abandonment of the founder's original mission and the assumption of a guerrilla-style political drift since the 1930s (p. 44), saying that he was "outlining a battle plan for an "army" of the faithful" (p. 44). This "discovery" of alleged political fanaticism with violent overtones will accompany the author throughout the rest of the story and serve as a basis for twisting other facts. The book also uses documents out of their historical context, providing as sources for describing

the current lifestyle of Opus Dei members documents such as the 1950 Constitutions or compilations of past *experiences* that have long since been superseded; it is like writing a book on the current state of the Catholic Church by quoting documents from Trent or the First Vatican Council.

● *Using anonymous sources.* The author does this all the time: "a numerary," "a person," "a conversation with residents," an "interview by the author of someone with direct knowledge of the incident," etc. In the "Acknowledgements" he says that they do it "for fear of potential reprisals," apparently wishing to provide a pseudo-justification for the stream of anonymous declarations that courses through the book. To fabricate facts, he sometimes uses an anonymous source who in turn quotes another anonymous source.

For example, on p. 285 he recounts a conversation between lawyer Sebastian Sal and an anonymous lawyer; Gore's source for that conversation is a third person, also anonymous (see notes).

● *Using real data to construct new false or fabricated "data."* For example, on p. 42, it says that Escrivá on "other days, he thought about leaving the priesthood entirely." In the notes, he provides an official document in which Escriva is listed among the applicants for a post in the state administration, and Gore makes this a *proof* that he wanted to leave the priesthood. This is obviously not the case; for example, Saint Josemaría also thought of applying to a university professorship, as did other priests. What is well documented in the sources is that the founder of Opus Dei never expressed doubts about his priesthood in words or in writing.

● *Not backing up the claim or "alleged facts" with sources*, even when serious allegations are involved. For example, on p. 212, Gore states that Luis Valls was "Bedridden and increasingly disoriented because of his illness and the cocktail of drugs Opus Dei doctors had prescribed for him." Neither in the text nor in the notes does he provide any sources to support this curious assertion, which is denied by those who lived with him.

● *Recreating the thoughts and intentions of the protagonists and offering them to the reader as actual fact*. For example, speaking of the founder on p. 117, he states that "His ego was appeased somewhat by the construction of an enormous shrine in the Pyrenean foothills—supposedly dedicated to the Virgin who had saved his life when he was a toddler, but really a monument to

Escrivá himself and the movement he had built." No sources are given for this allegation. On several occasions, the author uses his imagination to judge people's intentions, always in favour of his preconceived thesis, and gives these fantasies the character of proven fact.

● *Turning conjecture and speculation into fact.* For example, on p. 267, commenting on Cardinal Bergoglio's years in Buenos Aires, he states that "while it bothered Bergoglio that he had no jurisdiction over Opus Dei, they seemed to be doing all the right things." Gore backs this up in the notes for that page: "Author interview with one person familiar with the Pope's thinking, November 2023." He fabricates a fact from the conjecture of an (anonymous) person who is supposed to know the pope's thinking (at this stage it does not matter whether the knowledge

comes from direct contact or from having read several books).

- *Turning real information into dubious or malicious facts.* For example, the way the Syndicate of Banco Popular is described as a mysterious and covert procedure to control a financial entity, when it is a regular and regulated tool of coordination among shareholders.
- *Using rigorous sources to support his narrative, but omitting or misrepresenting the part that does not support it.* He does this both with written sources and with interviews he has conducted with people in Opus Dei. For example, referring to the financing of the film "There be Dragons," Gore writes of a "mysterious foundation" and of a "golden investor" (p. 238), and his source in the Notes is a conversation with a member of the film's production. But according to that

source, consulted in the preparation of this document, the reference to the "mysterious foundation" or "golden investor" is pure fantasy (Clarification by Dámaso Ezpeleta, 15-10-2024).

● *Using manipulative language.* A particularly relevant example is the constant use of "recruit," "recruitment" (about 160 times), "capture," "captured," etc., to refer to members of Opus Dei or to the vocational apostolate, imposing a term that is hardly ever (and then only metaphorically) used in Christian vocational discernment. The same is true of many other words in the book.

● *Extensively using texts from the past known for their animosity towards Opus Dei*, which have been comprehensively answered by more recent and historically rigorous sources. The problem is not that he

uses critical texts, but that he does not counterbalance them. Among these authors are mainly Alberto Moncada (cited 40 times in the Notes), Robert Hutchison, (15), Michael Walsh (11), Kenneth L. Woodward (6), etc. On the other hand, Gore ignores numerous clarifications and information offered to him in conversations with the Prelature's communications offices in Rome, New York, London, Buenos Aires and Madrid.

- *Supporting "real facts" and interpretations by quoting works of fiction, such as *The Da Vinci Code* (used twenty times between the text and the notes).*

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**Errors and biased interpretations: some examples**

Following the publication of *Opus*, Gore has stated in an interview that "the book is 100 percent correct." The truth is that it distorts reality as a whole and many specific facts. The following is a sample of verifiable errors and biased interpretations, so that the reader can form his or her own judgement. The titles and pages mentioned below correspond to those of Gareth Gore's book (*Opus*, Simon & Schuster, 2024, 439 pages).

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## ***Introduction (pp. 1-14)***

**-Page 3ff:** The author identifies the Banco Popular shareholders' Syndicate as the group through which Opus Dei allegedly controlled this financial institution. Later in this document, we have included an

explanation on the legitimate functioning of the Syndicate, which is similar to that of other banks; the explanation was provided by the Foundations created by Luis Valls Taberner, president of the bank. For now we wish to clarify that Opus Dei has never owned a bank or intervened in its governance, neither through such a syndicate nor by any other method. What is public knowledge is that Luis Valls Taberner and some of the people he brought into his project were members of Opus Dei (see, for example, <https://www.luisvallstaberner.com/en/his-vocation/>) and that they had a strong desire to change society for the better. The reality is a completely different story than that told by Gore, even if he refuses to accept it. The alleged control by Opus Dei is a kind of "foundational assumption" of the book upon which he will build a false narrative.

Later on (for example, on p. 19) he refers to Banco Popular as the "Bank of Opus Dei." In the words of Francisco Aparicio (Director of the foundations created by Valls Taberner): "There is always a tendency to qualify and simplify. Banco Santander is known as 'the bank of the Botín family'; BBVA as 'the bank of Basque businessmen'. In all these cases there is some truth, but it is not the full truth: Luis Valls was from Opus Dei, and that explains why some colloquially describe Popular as 'the bank of Valls' or 'the bank of Opus Dei,' although this does not reflect reality" (Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 10 October 2024).

**-Page 5:** He says that the late Javier Valls Taberner told him that when his brother Luis was ill, shortly before his death, "they tried to stop me seeing him," as if it were a "plot" by Opus Dei to keep him away from the governance of that bank. This is

totally false; besides the fact that, as has been said, Opus Dei did not control the bank, his brother Javier could have visited him as often as he wished, and that is what he actually did. This is explained by Francisco Aparicio, who in those years was Luis Valls' closest collaborator:

*"Luis Valls continued coming to the Bank normally until October 2005, although his health had obviously deteriorated.*

*The account of the last months of his life is the author's imagination: Luis received visitors (intentionally few, only those he wanted), and there was no obstacle for his brother to visit him, as he did whenever he wanted. For example, I remember accompanying him on at least two occasions. One was at the Ruber International Hospital, in Mirasierra. The second visit was at Luis's house, before Antonio Pérez's funeral: after*

*that visit, Javier and I went to the church in front of the Council of State.*

*Moreover, the relationship with his family went far beyond his brother Javier. In fact, two other brothers also worked at the Bank. Javier stayed longer than any other brother and they also shared the presidency. They were in frequent contact with each other. They complemented each other, helped each other and understood each other despite their different characters and personal situations, as happens in almost all families.*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 12 November 2024).

**-Page 5:** He reproduces a slander from 1982 about Roberto Calvi, the Italian banker murdered in the early 1980s, "at the hands of people close to Opus Dei, according to legend." It is at least welcome that Gore places this falsehood in the realm of "legend." To remove any uncertainty,

see the various denials since this fallacy was first spread in August 1982. Among others, there is the letter from Mario Lantini (then Counsellor of Opus Dei in Italy) to Carlo Calvi on 19 November 1982. In it he stated:

*"In my capacity as Counsellor of Opus Dei in Italy, I wish, first of all, to confirm what has already been repeatedly communicated and reported by all the press, that is, that no person in the name of Opus Dei has ever had any direct or indirect relationship or negotiation with Roberto Calvi or the IOR, in relation to the sale or purchase of shares in the Ambrosiano or any other economic-financial operation (or planned operation) of any size or importance. Given this absolute non-involvement of Opus Dei, in order to shed full light on this aspect, it seems obvious that it would be necessary to know what elements they are*

*referring to when they speak of Opus Dei. This, among other things, in order to expose those who have misused the name of Opus Dei or have tried to make false conjectures."*

The letter was never answered and the "legend" ended there. Gore does not mention this letter nor any of the other public information of the time available on the internet.

**-Page 6:** Gore expresses surprise that in almost all the conversations he had with several people from Opus Dei who had worked at Banco Popular (which disappeared in 2017 when it was bought by Banco Santander), they began by explaining that they were acting on their own initiative, autonomously. "The weird thing," he says, "was that they would each offer up this statement unprompted." The clarification—without knowing exactly what "almost all" means—makes sense in

the context of the interviews, as the book itself has made clear. The alleged institutional connection of the bank with Opus Dei has been another of the legends since Luis Valls Taberner joined the board in 1952. Gore knows this legend because he repeatedly uses a book by Alberto Moncada that spread it widely. Unfortunately, his difficulty in understanding the professional autonomy of Opus Dei members—Catholic lay people like any others, with no more or fewer rights than others—means that it is still necessary to make clarifications of this kind.

**-Page 7:** He explains that when he began working on his book, he was struck by "an article from the Associated Press about a group of forty-two women in Argentina who alleged they had been recruited by Opus Dei as young girls and forced to work effectively as slaves." The

author omits the clarifications of the Opus Dei spokeswoman that appear in the same source he quotes (the Associated Press story), and those published immediately afterwards. On that occasion, and on other occasions before and since, Opus Dei has expressed a desire to learn from its mistakes (for example, when not sufficiently separating the vocational and professional spheres) and to help people in need, but has categorically denied the accusation of any slave labour. An Opus Dei spokeswoman said: "It is clear that there is pain in these testimonies and it is also clear that we have not always been sensitive enough to listen at the time, especially when some of the people needed more support. In these cases, Opus Dei will never tire of asking for forgiveness and trying to help each of these women according to their needs." She also explained that "To this end, healing and resolution protocols have been set up and made

available, aimed at receiving any negative experiences that may have occurred, asking for forgiveness and making amends where appropriate. This channel has already proven to be very positive in some places: it has allowed for the resolution of specific grievances and the rebuilding of relationships."

Also on page 7, the author cites an Associated Press article about a complaint by the group to the Vatican, but omits the clarification by Josefina Madariaga (director of communications for Opus Dei in Argentina) which was also reported by Associated Press: "We do not have any official notification from the Vatican about the existence of a complaint of this type." It is hard to understand that, in the face of such a serious matter, only one side is given space, when the sources are available to anyone.

**-Page 7:** Regarding the specific vocation of the assistant numeraries referred to on this page, we offer some necessary clarifications: Gareth Gore presents them throughout his book as people with basic education and lack of agency. The reality is different:

- In terms of studies, some assistant numeraries have a high degree of professional specialisation, both technical (e.g. dieticians, pastry chefs, sommeliers, etc.) and academic (philologists, biologists, nurses or historians, or have studied Business Administration, Physics, Art History or Communication). Their choice of life is not due to a lack of professional opportunities, but is the result of a free and personal decision, and each one uses her talents in the way she wants.

- Many assistant numeraries are people who, despite their professional training, would have prioritised the care of their family over any employment outside of the home. And this same mentality of prioritising the care of one's own family is what they have now. But for Gore they are always people who are 'employed,' not people who have made a free choice that reflects a personal commitment to service to others, far removed from the interpretations that the author tries to make.
- In order to grow as a society, we believe it is essential to recognise the social and economic value of care and work rendered in the home, as well as the rights associated with them. The author's way of

referring to these jobs is often derogatory.

**-Page 7:** He refers to some associations that received aid from Banco Popular (in most cases loans, offered by the foundations and not by the bank itself) and mentions that among them was the entity "related to the alleged enslavement of the 42 women in Argentina." Gore is referring here (as he will do numerous times throughout the book) to the ICIED, an institute created in 1973 by Opus Dei members through the Association for the Promotion of Culture as a technical high school project. The school specialised in the administration of services in homes and institutions. It is worth making a few remarks about this institute:

- Taking into account the socio-cultural environment of those years in Argentina, in which

many girls from vulnerable backgrounds only finished primary school, it was a pioneering initiative to offer a free option that would allow them to complete a middle school cycle and later finish their high school in another institution. In addition, it provided technical training for a trade.

- The intention was to contribute to the schooling and technical training of women, particularly in socially depressed areas, facilitating access to education for all sectors and areas, in order to broaden their possibilities and opportunities for work, in line with the recommendations by international organisations made during those years.
- The ICIED was an official secondary school, privately managed, under the National

Council of Technical Education of Argentina (CONET) and the National Superintendence of Private Education (SNEP), and at all times had the supervision and approvals of the Ministry of Culture and Education, the entity that grants official recognition of all curricula in Argentina. In 1994, due to a change in official legislation, it became dependent on the Province of Buenos Aires, as it was located in the Province, directly under the Provincial Directorate of Privately Managed Schools (DIPREGEPE).

- The positive evaluation of the ICIED by the Argentine State as an institution of great social contribution was shown in the fact that the State initially covered, as a state contribution, 70% of the salaries of its teaching staff. This subsidy rose to 100% in 1983. The fact that

the State progressively took over the salaries of the teaching staff was an implicit recognition of the social impact of the work carried out at the Institute, which improved the lives of so many people.

- ICIED ceased to exist in 2016 as a result of changing social circumstances and the creation of new educational services across the country, which no longer required female students to reside in educational facilities outside their home environment.
- On this website you can find out about the history of this school, as well as the testimonies of former pupils, the assessments of public educational bodies and the media.
- The mistakes that may have been made in the discernment processes of some people cause us pain, but a one-sided

assessment that ignores the educational, social and spiritual contributions of this initiative over so many years is not fair.

On the same page he refers to other "similar vocational training centres," which he connects again with alleged "recruitment" or other dubious purposes. The reality is that these hospitality schools (like other vocational schools in the field of mechanics, construction, etc.) are non-profit socio-educational initiatives approved and supervised by all competent state authorities in those countries where they were or are being run. In these cases, they provided an opportunity for thousands of women to continue their secondary education and, in addition, to train for a trade (through state-approved programmes and with parental authorisation). There is a wealth of information on the web at [www.infoycontexto.com/en](http://www.infoycontexto.com/en).

**-Page 9:** Gore says that by 2023 the Catholic Information Center (a diocesan institution to promote evangelization in the professional and cultural environments in and around Washington, DC) had been staffed by Opus Dei priests for forty years. The fact is that Opus Dei did not begin supplying a priest to be the Director of the CIC until 1992. A formal agreement about this between the Prelature of Opus Dei and the Archdiocese of Washington was signed in 1997.

**-Page 9:** Talking about the Catholic Information Centre in Washington DC, he says that there are "hundreds of similar centers around the world." In fact, there are only two such centres in the world, i.e. a diocesan institution staffed, by mutual agreement, with priests of the Prelature.

**-Page 10:** It says that at the heart of Opus Dei is a group of 9,000 people who are "an elite corps who live highly controlled existences. Having taken vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, this elite group live (sic) according to a dystopian set of rules and regulations." It is not clear to whom he is referring; if it were the celibate members of Opus Dei, it would be about 25,000. On the other hand, since 1983 no member has taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Vows are public promises that have a juridical effect within the structure of the Church. Opus Dei promotes the search for identification with Jesus Christ in ordinary life, through these three virtues (chastity, poverty and obedience) and the other traditional Christian virtues, but in a manner befitting a secular and lay vocation, without taking vows.

**-Page 10:** On the same page he states that these members live "according to a dystopian set of rules and regulations—an Orwellian blueprint for society laid down by the founder and kept hidden from authorities at the Vatican." He goes on to add that "Normal members are prohibited from reading these documents, which are kept under lock and key at the residences where the celibate members live together, to be consulted only by their superiors, who often abuse their authority to control the lives of those in their charge." Leaving aside the idea of the "Orwellian blueprint" (which does not merit an answer or comment), it is worth noting the following:

- All members of Opus Dei are familiar with the texts governing the Prelature. The Statutes of Opus Dei are available on the Internet and are commented and explained

regularly in special times of formation (generally in study weeks or annual courses).

Members are also familiar with the instructions and letters of the founder, which are being published in a comprehensive way for the general public (not only for members) in the collection of the complete works of St Josemaría. The overall plan for the publication can be found on the website of the Historical Institute.

- At present, all members have access to the written "Experiences" and other texts related to the organisation of the centres and the apostolate. As they are experiences rather than normative texts, these documents are regularly updated. In fact, Gore frequently mentions *vademecums, glosas* or *experiences* from the seventies,

eighties and nineties of the last century, or from 2003. All these have been replaced and have not been applied in the centres of the Work for some time. They were resources that have been updated with the accumulated experience, adapted to the needs of the moment, to the more or less positive consequences, to the changing uses in the Church and in society, to a more attentive assessment of the diversity of circumstances of the people of the Work, and so on.

- It is true that in the past the founder's as yet unpublished texts (letters, instructions, etc.) were given limited distribution. Today, plans for the full and complete publication of these works are proceeding well and many of these texts are already available in bookshops and on the Internet. Other texts of a

non-normative nature, intended to help local directors in various areas of the apostolate (family, youth, priests, etc.), were also reserved for internal use. Written in tentative, sometimes very direct language, they were inadequate outside their primary audience. In recent years it has been possible to incorporate many nuances acquired with experience, and a more explicit anthropological context. The result of this work is available to all members of Opus Dei.

- These texts are not, nor have they ever been, hidden from the Holy See, as Gore falsely and uncritically claims following the account of a website critical of Opus Dei. As was stated at the time, the Holy See has not only the Statutes of the Prelature (since the Holy See is the one who promulgated them) and

other texts, such as the *Ratio Institutionis* (also approved by the competent Dicastery), but also all the writings of the founder and all the documents that contain the spirit and the experiences of formation of Opus Dei: *De Spiritu*, Regional Experiences, Catechism of the Prelature of Opus Dei, Experiences for formation at the local level, etc.

**-Page 10:** Gore maintains that "Nine thousand members live this tightly controlled existence of prayer and indoctrination, where almost every move is meticulously prescribed and watched over, where contact with friends and family is restricted and monitored, and where their personal and professional lives are subject to the whims and needs of the wider movement." This is false. Anyone who knows a member of Opus Dei (woman or man, married or celibate)

knows that they have the same difficulties and demands as everyone else: stressful moments at work, family and social demands, care for personal health and others, social service, travel, rest and sport, care for one's original family and one's newly formed family through marriage or a vocational commitment, etc. Opus Dei members live freely in the middle of the world and no one has the slightest interest in controlling their movements.

**-Page 10:** He claims that Opus Dei centres around the world follow "a detailed playbook of surreptitious recruitment drawn up by the founder and geared toward a single aim: extending the movement's influence among the rich and the powerful." Gore refers to a well-known 1934 text by the founder "on the way to do proselytism." It is written in the language of the time (today its title would probably be "on

vocations ministry"); the text is difficult to understand without the historical and ecclesial context of the time, or from a perspective outside the religious and spiritual experience. Together with ideas and examples linked to his historical period, St Josemaría presents a panorama that has nothing to do with surreptitious "recruitment" and much to do with love of God. It is false that the purpose of this text is, in the words of Gore, not Escrivá, to extend "the movement's influence among the rich and the powerful." In a passage of that text referring to the future vocations of the Work, the founder states, for example, that there will be no place for the selfish, the lukewarm, the lazy, and so on. On the other hand, he says, "there is room for: the sick, God's favourites, and all those who have a big heart, even if their weaknesses have been greater.—Meditate ... and let us go on" (no. 65). There is no mention in

the text of influencing among the rich or powerful, and the work carried out by members of Opus Dei in fostering educational and social initiatives around the world demonstrates the falsity of Gore's characterization.

**-Page 11:** Gore states that "potential recruits (sic) are targeted while they are still children and are enticed into friendships with current members through 'love bombing.'" The expression "love bombing" and the meaning behind it is alien to Opus Dei. On the other hand, the evidence of the reality again contradicts the story: vocations to the Church and to Opus Dei come when God wants them to and at the most diverse ages. The Statutes of Opus Dei, approved by the Church in 1982, establish that the minimum age for formal commitment is 18, after at least a year and a half of preparation and discernment. This is the age of

majority for the Catholic Church (Code of Canon Law nn. 97 and 98). Young people who feel called to discern their vocation to Opus Dei can be Junior Candidates if they are over 14 and a half years old, but only with the express consent of their parents. These requirements are public and are explained in this [link](#). On this subject, which is a recurring topic throughout the book, we would like to explain that:

- In the work with young people, Opus Dei offers spiritual formation activities in order to inspire many young people to practice Christian virtues and to help them become persons of integrity who contribute to society by living the Christian message in their daily lives. These activities include weekly classes, prayer times and days of recollection or retreats. They are carried out with parental

involvement and approval and are designed to encourage young people to learn and practice their faith, to serve others, to be good children, siblings and friends; to prepare themselves to be good professionals and citizens and, in the future, to care for their families.

- Among the young people who attend these activities, some decide to embark on a vocational path of apostolic celibacy in Opus Dei, while the vast majority discover their vocation to marriage. Others opt for the priesthood or religious life in other Catholic institutions. We seek to educate and empower young people to choose their own paths and wish to be transparent about vocational choices in the Church.

- The upcoming canonisation of Carlo Acutis by Pope Francis shows that the search for a deep faith from an early age is not new. The Catholic Church does extensive apostolic work with children and young people, and has canonised people who discovered and followed their vocation from a very young age, such as St Therese of Lisieux, Saints Francisco and Jacinta of Fatima and many others. The Diocese of Salford is also currently studying the opening of the cause of canonisation of a young man from Manchester called Pedro Ballester, who began his vocational discernment in Opus Dei at the age of 16 and died from cancer aged 21 in 2018.

**-Page 11:** Gore refers to the educational and social initiatives promoted by Opus Dei members

around the world, with whom the Work establishes agreements to provide spiritual support and guidance. But, based upon his preconceived thesis, he defines them as "initiatives aimed at recruitment and at expanding the influence of Opus Dei deeper into society."

However much the author repeats this, the actual purpose of these institutions is to meet a real social need, like similar initiatives: education in the case of a school or university, accompaniment and care of the sick in the case of a hospital, social development in the case of an NGO, spiritual care of Catholics in the case of a church or chapel, etc. The work of giving a Christian spirit to these centres carried out by Opus Dei helps many people to get to know Christianity and the Catholic Church and, in some cases, to embark on vocational paths in marriage or celibacy, in Opus Dei or in any other institution of the Church. An

overview of these initiatives can be found [here](#): readers can access any of them and judge for themselves. Over the years, there are millions of people who have been in contact with them and are direct witnesses of this reality.

**-Page 11:** He adds that "Opus Dei denies that it controls any of this network, but this is a legal fiction designed to protect the organization from any scandal or blowback—and to absolve it of any responsibility toward the thousands of individuals whose lives it controls and abuses." It is not a legal fiction. It is a legitimate way of organising oneself which responds better than others to the secular nature of Opus Dei, even if the author does not like it.

The [Statutes of Opus Dei](#) clearly state that apostolic instruments are the responsibility of their owners and managers, who use goods and

resources that they acquire on their own initiative. The Statutes also state that the Prelature is not ordinarily the owner of the goods and instruments in which the initiatives that count on its spiritual assistance are carried out (cf. n. 122). Opus Dei as such does not need to own these instruments, although it would be entirely legitimate for it to do so.

This is precisely one of the innovations that Opus Dei encourages: to promote and strengthen the personal responsibility of lay Catholics who, without necessarily having an "official seal" of the Church, commit themselves to carrying out, in their own name, social, educational, etc. initiatives of clear Christian inspiration, making use of their own abilities and financial resources. It is a way of putting into practice what the Second Vatican Council indicated as something proper to the laity:

promoting "apostolic initiatives constituted by the free decision of the laity and governed by their right and prudent judgement" (cf. Apostolicam actuositatem, 24), through which, "in certain circumstances, the mission of the Church can be better fulfilled." They are therefore initiatives or entities which are not ecclesiastical, but civil: promoted, managed and administered always in accordance with the legislation of each nation, and subject to the same public controls as similar institutions.

As Giorgio Zennaro, administrator of Opus Dei in Italy, explains in an interview:

*Anyone who wants to see "cover-ups" will see them in all of the cases I've described, but the truth is that these are initiatives of free individuals, managed by their own boards... To explain it in the reverse: if the owner or manager of any of these*

*instruments wanted to stop contributing to or collaborating with an Opus Dei initiative, they could. Opus Dei neither owns nor manages them, and would have no power to stop it... There are other legitimate, legal ways of organizing things, but Opus Dei has chosen not to accumulate wealth as an expression of its foundational charism.*

**-Page 11:** He argues that "this elite corps is aided in its task by a clandestine network of foundations and companies." As this is a claim that Gore makes repeatedly throughout the book, it is worth clarifying once again that Opus Dei does not own any companies. The Work establishes agreements of formative and spiritual orientation with institutions or companies with educational, welfare or social purposes: universities, training centres, schools, hospitals, social service initiatives, etc.; these

institutions are promoted by members of Opus Dei together with many other people, including non-Catholics and non-believers.

These institutions are not a network. As has just been explained, they have well-known owners and leaders, and their relationship with the Work is not "clandestine," but public. Nor do the foundations, associations or entities that set up these initiatives or others to support them financially, or to support other initiatives inspired by the message of Opus Dei, belong to Opus Dei. On the matter of foundations, we offer here an explanation by Giorgio Zennaro:

*"Each apostolic initiative looks for the best way to ensure its sustainability, like many other institutions, whether or not they are affiliated with the Catholic Church. For instance, nearly every university in the world is supported by foundations and*

*associations that allow them to receive and channel donations.*

*The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, to take one example, receives aid from several foundations established to channel donations for the university's maintenance and, more broadly, for the formation of priests, including the CARF Foundation (Spain), the Santa Croce Foundation (Canada), or the Priesterausbildungshilfe e.V. (Germany).*

*Elsewhere, members of Opus Dei have created foundations to make it possible for people to contribute to the upkeep of apostolic instruments of the spiritual formation offered by the Prelature. The Woodlawn Foundation (United States) and the Netherhall Educational Association (England) are two such foundations, and they have clear and transparent mission statements.*

*There are also foundations created by members of the Work and others to support projects related to the common good. Some of those projects are related to Opus Dei, while others are not. You might think, for example, of the foundations Luis Valls-Taberner launched in Spain.*

*There are also a couple of examples in Italy, including the Biomedical University Foundation, initiated by Joaquín Navarro Valls to support universities and medical centers like the Campus Bio-Medico in Rome: the legacy of an individual who wanted to leave something lasting behind in support of his hopes and ideals."*

**-Page 11:** The insistence of the author of *Opus* throughout the book on the subject of foundations (foundations or entities to support a university, a school, a residence, etc.) and the supposed centralised control of the institution over them (which is false),

could lead the reader to think of figures in the billions. Gore mentions the word "million" or "millions" more than 100 times. For this purpose, some clarifications and points of reference may be useful:

- To offer a point of comparison, this table summarises the *endowment funds of several US universities* in 2023: the first (Harvard) has an *endowment fund* of 49 billion dollars; around the middle of the list is a Catholic university (University of Notre Dame) at 16 billion dollars; and further down the list, Boston College and Georgetown University (founded by the Society of Jesus), each of which has an endowment fund of more than 3 billion dollars. The University of Navarra (the most relevant educational initiative promoted by Opus Dei) had in the same

year an endowment fund of less than 200 million euros (Cfr. the university's financial report).

- If one were to make the effort to add up all the millions that Gore mentions in the book, and allocate them to Opus Dei (the allocation would be wrong but the exercise is legitimate) the resulting sum would not reach the volume of even the last of the American universities mentioned in this list.
- A review of the economic functioning of Opus Dei can be found in the annual information provided in the bulletin of the Prelature. In these links you can see the information for the last 5 years: 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019.
- The two most notable and verifiable amounts mentioned in Gore's book of truly Opus Dei-related initiatives concern the launching of the Saxum

project in the Holy Land (a house for spiritual retreats and conferences, together with the Holy Land Learning Centre, involving Christians, Jews and Muslims), and the construction of the Murray Hill Conference Center in New York (which includes an area for retreats and conferences, a university residence, and three spiritual formation centers, as well as an area for the governing bodies of Opus Dei in the United States). Certainly these are two projects with great cultural and evangelising outreach, serving very many people. Both projects went ahead thanks to the efforts and collaboration of thousands of people, and both were communicated clearly and transparently. In total, their promoters and owners raised \$80 million and \$60 million respectively, earmarked for

construction and the endowment fund that would ensure their future sustainability (e.g. in periods like the current one when there are no activities in the Holy Land, but the fixed maintenance costs remain).

**-Page 11:** Gore attributes this alleged expansion of initiatives to money obtained thanks to "the organization's cozy relationship with the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco." This would have "enabled Opus Dei to buy power and influence across six continents—from Santiago to Stockholm, Los Angeles to Lagos, and Mexico City to Manila." This is another falsehood: in addition to the chronological error (when Franco died, in 1975, Opus Dei was not yet established in either Stockholm or Los Angeles), the Spanish government aid received by Opus Dei-related initiatives during those

years (1940-1975) was similar to that received by other Catholic educational and cultural institutions of the time. At that time, it was common practice for Catholic institutions to turn to the Spanish state for financial support. Dioceses, orders and religious institutions did so. The regime was confessionally Catholic and the flow of money was extraordinarily limited in a country with scarce resources: it was impossible to start a school or university without initial support from the state. The amount of state support given to religious institutions could be compared to the amount of public support given by the state to NGOs and welfare initiatives today. In support of the thesis of a 'close relationship' with Francoism, in Chapter 3 Gore will refer to a well-known letter from 1954 in which Álvaro del Portillo asked the head of state for a long-term loan for the headquarters of the Roman College

of the Holy Cross in Rome. Beyond questions of the appropriateness of that letter, which would have to be assessed in its particular historical context, the definitive fact is that the credit was not granted.

**-Page 11:** He insinuates that Opus Dei acquired "special powers" from the Holy See in the early 1980s, "at a time when the Vatican was mired in deep financial trouble and amid swirling rumors about Opus Dei's role in a huge financial bailout for the Holy See." Gore adds that "these privileges catapulted the group into the upper echelons of the Catholic Church, legitimizing it among the faithful, turbocharging its recruitment efforts, and facilitating the canonization of its founder." The insinuation is completely false: Opus Dei had no role whatsoever in an alleged "huge financial bailout." The author himself appears to base this falsehood on "rumours," as there is

no real basis for it. It is also a grave accusation of a kind of simony on the part of the Holy See.

**-Page 12:** Gore writes that "For all its talk about allegiance to the Vatican, the Church, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, *Opus Dei* seems unconcerned that many of the conservative forces it now embraces in the United States are openly hostile to the pope—even going so far as to undermine his authority and plot against him." Among many other texts that contradict this view, one might mention chapter 17 of the book "Two Popes" by Cardinal Julián Herranz, whom Gore later calls "Opus Dei kingmaker" (p. 227). In that chapter Cardinal Herranz warns of the danger posed by certain conservative American forces that seem to place ideology and nationality above being Catholic:

*"The cultural arc where this attitude of rejection of Bergoglio's pontificate first manifested itself and grew was not Italy or Europe—Herranz states at the beginning of the chapter—but some strongly ideologised political-economic and religious sectors in the United States. A curious front that perhaps—from a historical point of view—responded in large part to an apparent line of growing political contamination of the Catholic world and part of the episcopate. This surprised me, I could not quite explain it, and it hurt me for so many reasons given my affection for people and cultural and religious institutions of that great nation" (cfr. Julián Herranz, "Due Papi. I miei ricordi con Benedetto XVI e Francesco," Piemme, Milan 2023).*

From there, the cardinal painfully analyses this wave of opposition to the pontiff. He has been one of the voices that with the greatest force

and no little resistance has denounced this contradiction. Gore ignores it.

**-Page 12:** Gore provides his subjective interpretation of the purpose of the *motu proprio* "Ad charisma tuendum" (Pope Francis, 14 July 2022) and suggests that "the organisation failed to take heed." In this regard:

- The Holy See's interpretation of the significance of this document does not coincide with that of Gore, as explained in the Vatican news website here.
- It is completely false that Opus Dei failed to take heed. From the very moment the *motu proprio* was published, the Prelate of Opus Dei sent this message to all the members of the Work in which, among other things, he stated: "I also

ask you to pray for the work that Pope Francis has asked us to carry out in order to adapt the particular law of the Prelature to the indications of the Motu proprio *Ad charisma tuendum*, remaining – as he himself tells us – faithful to the charism." From there, and in permanent liaison with the Holy See, a worldwide consultation was held on the modifications to the statutes (October-December 2022), an extraordinary general congress was held to study the proposals (12-16 April 2023) and the result of the work was handed over to the Holy See (June 2023).

- This *motu proprio* of Pope Francis confirms the bull Ut sit (with which John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal prelature) and the original charism. It also asks Opus Dei to make a proposal to update its

Statutes in accordance with these new guidelines.

**-Page 12:** He mentions a second *motu proprio* which modifies some aspects of the personal prelatures and predicts that "a vicious fight looms between Opus Dei and the progressive forces of the Catholic Church." Some clarifications:

- The author omits the interpretation of Pope Francis himself, the author of the *motu proprio*. Asked explicitly about this reform of the prelatures and their relationship with Opus Dei, the pontiff explained to the ABC newspaper: *"It is not just a question of Opus Dei, but of personal prelatures. In the Curia's scheme, Opus Dei depended on the Congregation of Bishops, but in the Code of Canon Law prelatures are framed in a different way, and*

*the criteria had to be unified. The matter was studied and it was said, 'let the prelature go to the Congregation of the Clergy'. I did it in dialogue with them. It was a serene and normal thing, done by canonists, even Opus canonists worked on the process." And later the Holy Father added: "The measure is a relocation that had to be resolved. It is not right to distort the topic, neither to make them victims, nor to make them in need of punishment. Please. I am a very good friend of Opus Dei, I love them very much and they work well in the Church. The good they do is very great."*

- Pope Francis was also asked a question on this from Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti: "In the framework of this reform [of the curia] you issued a decree that modifies the relationship of Opus Dei

with the Vatican, which since 1982 was a "personal prelature" that depended directly on the Pope and now no longer does. In addition, you stipulated that its superior would no longer be a bishop, as had been the case. There are those who say that 'The Work' was demoted ..." This was the Holy Father's reply: *"I do not agree. It is a typically worldly interpretation, alien to the religious dimension. For one thing, Opus Dei—which remains a prelature—is not the only one to have undergone a reorganisation during my pontificate. I am thinking, for example, of Communion and Liberation, the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Focolare Movement. Opus Dei used to report to the Congregation for Bishops, but now it will report to the Congregation for the Clergy, as is the case for personal*

*prelatures. This means that the report on its work will no longer be five-yearly, but annual. As for the fact that whoever is at the head will no longer be promoted to the episcopate, the decision—as the decree clearly states—is intended to reinforce a form of government based not so much on hierarchical authority, but above all on the charism which, in the case of Opus Dei, involves seeking sanctification through work and family and social commitments* (Cfr. Sergio Rubin, and Francesca Ambrogetti, "El Pastor," Ediciones B, March 2023).

- He also omits the immediate reaction of filial acceptance on the part of the prelate of Opus Dei, who said, among other things: *"Thus we follow the spirit with which St Josemaría and his successors accepted any provision of the Pope related to*

*Opus Dei. Since the Work belongs to both God and the Church, the Holy Spirit is guiding us at all times."*

- In addition to interpreting without any proof the Pope's supposed ultimate intentions, the author conceives of the Church in a worldly key of "conservative" and "progressive" power groups, as if they were factions of an ideological current. Instead of the "vicious fight" to which he refers, there are now regular meetings of a working group made up of experts from the Holy See and Opus Dei, which take place in a climate of trust and understanding, in the hope of being able to conclude the work of amending the statutes as soon as possible, in accordance with the Pope's wishes. This is what the prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Ocáriz, has

expressed time and again in various interviews, such as this one with Avvenire: "*As the Pope said, it is a matter of ensuring that the adjustments preserve the charism and nature of Opus Dei, without constricting or stifling it: for example, by stressing its secular character, and the fact that more than 98% of the members are lay people, men and women who live their vocation in the street, in the family, at work. To this end, a series of meetings are being held between representatives of the Dicastery of the Clergy and four Opus Dei canon lawyers, three men and one woman. As we are still in the middle of this process, I cannot give more details. But I can assure you that the work is taking place in a climate of dialogue and trust*" (Avvenire, 30-VI-2024).

**-Page 12:** The author once again describes the Work as "secretive." In addition to being a public institution of the Church, it is hard to believe this kind of adjective when he himself has had the opportunity to interview very many people of Opus Dei, to visit all the centres he has wished to visit, etc. For example, during the three days he spent in Rome in November 2023, he was able to have interviews with 15 different people, all those he had requested and some others that were offered to him because they seemed interesting for his work. In addition, the website [www.opusdei.org](http://www.opusdei.org) has 12 million *unique visitors* a year, and millions of *interactions through its social networks* (*Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Spotify, Flickr*); and the Romana bulletin publishes all the official documents of the prelature, the appointments of its governing bodies, financial information and many other items. Paradoxically, this

type of information is easier to find in some Church institutions than in publishing houses or the media. On the other hand, efforts to achieve higher levels of transparency are ongoing: we accept and hope that further improvements can be made.

**Page 13:** Gore claims that there is no sign at the entrance to Murray Hill Place to hide that "a well-oiled brainwashing machine is at work." This is not true. There is a sign on the front of the building that says the offices of the Prelature of Opus Dei are in the building. It has been there since the beginning of the building (circa 2001).

**-Page 13:** Gore claims that the residents of Schuyler Hall (one of the residences of the above-mentioned building in New York) are cut off from the world and their families. This is false: they have normal jobs and see their families like everyone

else. On the other hand, it seems difficult to be "cut off from the world" if you live in New York, in the heart of Manhattan and have a "high-paying job in the world of law or finance" (as he puts it).

**-Page 13:** It states that "Men without a university degree are usually not admitted [into Opus Dei]—although the organization actively recruits lesser educated women." This is false. There are thousands of men and women (married and celibate) without university degrees in Opus Dei. A university degree is only a requirement for priests of the prelature and for lay members who are available to take on formation and leadership roles (numeraries).

**-Page 14:** After a gloomy portrayal of the life of the people of Opus Dei, the introduction ends: "Meanwhile, in Rome, the leaders of the movement live a life of opulence at the palatial

Villa Tevere, where the life of St Josemaría is commemorated in a solemn ceremony every day at noon." He gives no references to explain what "palatial" consists in, nor any details of the "life of opulence." The ceremony in which "every morning the life of St Josemaría is commemorated" does not exist. What is celebrated daily in the prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace (open to the public) are two Masses (at 8.30 am and 12 noon), as can be seen in the brochure available at this [link](#).

**-Pages 1-14:** In short, the Introduction begins a narrative characterised by the absence of nuance, the continuous use of denigrating adjectives, false accusations and the absence of any positive traits. These are "preliminary conclusions" that will guide the subsequent chapters. The

text does not even pretend to show a semblance of objectivity.

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## ***Chapter 1. The Syndicate (pp. 15-36)***

**Pages 15-36:** Throughout this chapter, Gore identifies the "syndicate of shareholders" as the body from which, according to his thesis, Opus Dei would have controlled Banco Popular. As stated above, this is a basic error, which is to confuse the professional action of Valls Taberner and other people working with him, with institutional action by Opus Dei. But, beyond this obvious clarification, on the subject of the syndicate, we offer an explanation provided by Francisco Aparicio and María José Cantón

(Directors of Fomento de Fundaciones, Madrid), complementary to others of a technical nature that can be found on the website <https://www.luisvallstaberner.com/en>

Did the syndicate of shareholders of Banco Popular (La Sindicatura) have any relationship with Opus Dei?

*The syndicate had no relationship with Opus Dei. When Luis Valls joined the syndicate in the 1950s, he invited other shareholders known to him or close to him to join, as he sought—and obtained—the syndicate's support for his appointment as a member of the Board and as Executive Vice-President of the Bank.*

*Luis Valls was a member of Opus Dei, and in his entourage there were logically also people from this institution who joined the shareholders' pact, and others who*

*were not related to Opus Dei but were related to Luis Valls or his family.*

*Luis Valls was Executive Vice-Chairman of Banco Popular from 1957 to 1972, from 1972 to 2004 President of the Bank, and until 2006 Chairman of the Board: almost 50 years in total. During that time, it was common to hear about a relationship between Opus Dei and the syndicate of shareholders, as several of the shareholders close to Luis Valls continued to join the syndication pact. There were individual entrepreneurs, companies, foundations: some of them had among their partners or board members some members of Opus Dei, but most of them did not. What united the shareholders who adhered to the pact was not their closeness to Opus Dei, but their closeness to Luis Valls or his successors, because when Luis Valls died, the syndicate continued.*

*The syndication agreement came to have more than 2,000 shareholders, who joined the agreement in a very capillary way through the commercial offices, and therefore outside any control or capacity of a priori selection of the shareholders who signed it. As a whole, over the years the pact represented on average 9% of the bank's capital.*

*There was a commercial company that gave legal support to the syndicate pact. This company has been in the process of being dissolved since October 2017, as its only asset, the Banco Popular shares, has disappeared. There is still no final resolution in the lawsuits brought by various shareholders against the decision of the Single Resolution Board (SRB) or the European Commission, and the liability claims of these institutions. At the time of the Bank's resolution, Sindicatura SA held 0.5% of the Bank's capital.*

Is it possible that syndicate shareholders voted twice at Banco Popular meetings, once as shareholders and once as part of the syndicate group (as stated in Gore's book)?

*No, that is not possible: when the syndicate exercised its vote at any meeting, and even more so at the General Meeting, it excluded all those who attended or voted in person or by any other proxy. For years, the computer systems themselves would have detected this, and neither the Board nor the notary who took the minutes, would have accepted any duplication.*

(Clarifications by Francisco Aparicio and María José Cantón, Directors of Fomento de Fundaciones, Madrid, 10-10-2024).

**-Page 21:** Again, Gore refers to the syndicate, the "layers of companies," the mystery, the possibility of tracing

back to various foundations related to Opus Dei, etc. As Cantón and Aparicio explain, "it is clear that these entities can be traced, as it is enough to consult their annual accounts: all of them were deposited annually in the Register of Companies; and the listed ones (such as Unión Europea de Inversiones) in the National Securities Market Commission (CNMV), and they can be accessed on the internet. All these data are public. On the other hand, to maintain that the presence of a director who belongs to or has a relationship with someone from Opus Dei implies attributing ownership directly or indirectly to Opus Dei would be like attributing ownership of a company to the Vatican on the grounds that there is a Catholic in the ownership or management of the company." (Clarifications by Francisco Aparicio and María José

Cantón, Directors of Fomento de Fundaciones, Madrid, 10-10-2024).

**-Page 19:** Referring to the house in which Luis Valls lived during his last illness in 2005, the author says that the numeraries "led a hidden existence bound by vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience, and were expected to follow a strict timetable." He uses the 1950 Constitutions of Opus Dei as a source, and adds in the notes that "although the 1950 constitutions were replaced by the 1982 statutes, the former contains a much more detailed list of rules and is to this day considered by most members as the guidance to follow." This is false: the 1950 constitutions ceased to be used when new ones came into force in 1963, and these were in turn replaced by new ones in 1974, and finally, by the Statutes of Opus Dei as a personal prelature. Those constitutions are not even known to most members of Opus Dei,

except the older ones or those who have consulted them in history books. On the other hand, they could hardly lead "a hidden existence bound by vows," because from the moment Opus Dei was established as a personal prelature in 1982, vows ceased to exist for all members, and that was almost half a century ago.

**-Pages 22-30:** Gore offers a fictionalised, distorted account of Luis Valls' daily life in his home (his Opus Dei centre in Madrid). The unnamed sources he mentions for this description ("from interviews with residents," in the notes) are not acknowledged in the account. For those who want to know direct testimonies from Luis Valls Taberner's friends and family, they can be found in abundance on this website, which Gore does not even mention.

**Page 28:** Gore promotes an oft-repeated allegation concerning a public meeting of Bishop Javier Echeverría in Sicily in 1997, according to which he had said "that 90 % of disabled children were born to parents who had not kept their bodies *clean* before marriage." The clarification at the time by Echevarría himself in the newspaper *Avvenire* leaves no doubt about his thinking: "To state that ninety percent of disabled people are children of parents who have not arrived chaste at marriage—the prelate explained—is something absurd and complete nonsense." The full statement can be read here: "Bishop Javier Echevarría and the misunderstanding over a statement about parents of people with Down syndrome."

**-Pages 30-36:** Gore gives an account of Father McCloskey and his arrival at the Catholic Information Center in

Washington. At one point, Gore mentions the allegations against Father C. John McCloskey and Opus Dei's response to them. Opus Dei's statements are public and can be found [here](#).

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## ***Chapter 2. The family business (pp. 37-59)***

**-Page 37:** Gore says that St Josemaría had "been offered an idyllic posting shortly after being ordained—a tiny village just outside of Saragossa." In reality, he had not been offered a post; it was a short term substitution because the parish priest of Perdiguera was ill. We do not know what the author considers idyllic: as we read in [Wikipedia](#), Perdiguera "is a rural town in a desertic area which

at the time had about 800 inhabitants," and which at the time was reached by horse-drawn stagecoach (Cf. also Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume I: The Early Years*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 2001, p. 146).

**-Page 39:** Gore states that St Josemaría had joined the seminary "as a pathway to a better life and for opportunities beyond his hometown." The reality is that he went to the seminary because he felt he had a calling from God. On the other hand, at that time in Spain, first-born sons did not usually go to the seminary as a way to prosper, because they had to take responsibility for the family; and in the case of an only child, even less so. The young Escrivá did both, following the path of the priesthood and taking responsibility for his family after his father's death in 1924

(cf. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume I: The Early Years*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 2001, p. 81-82).

**-Page 39:** He argues that in Madrid, "moving to the Apostolic Ladies brought Escrivá into contact with real poverty for the first time." Before going to Madrid he had already had contact with real poverty in the suburbs of Zaragoza, specifically in the Casablanca district of that town (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. xxviii).

**-Page 39:** He states that "The Apostolic Ladies had set up a string of schools and soup kitchens, and part of the young chaplain's duties involved going out to the city's slums to anoint the sick or give catechism classes." Going to these deprived neighbourhoods was not part of his

chaplain's contract. St Josemaría went to serve the people who lived in those neighbourhoods because he wanted to (Cf. Julio González-Simancas, "St Josemaría among the sick in Madrid, 1927-1931," *Studia et Documenta* 2, 2008, pp. 151-152).

**-Page 40:** He claims that in the 1930s in Madrid Escrivá wanted "to defend the hurch at all costs, even if that meant turning a blind eye to the suffering around him." This statement is false and Gore does not back it up with any source. There are numerous sources to the contrary. Escrivá and the Apostolic Ladies gave a Christian response to these sufferings with their pastoral and human attention to the poor and the sick, which included soup kitchens, schools, dispensaries, etc., in addition to religious services, (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 5; Vázquez de

Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume I: The Early Years*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 2001, p. 206; Julio González-Simancas, "St Josemaría among the sick in Madrid, 1927-1931," *Studia et Documenta* 2, 2008, pp. 151-152).

**-Page 40:** He states that St Josemaría's mother pressured him to keep his family in Madrid. Rather, his mother seconded the decisions of her son, José María, who—in accordance with what his confessor, the Jesuit Sánchez Ruiz, told him—wished to remain in the capital to help develop Opus Dei (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 13).

**-Pages 41-42:** Gore writes that "despite being convinced that the Lord had spoken to him directly, for the next four years Escrivá did surprisingly little to realize God's

will." In reality he did all he could, although he received no more foundational lights until November 1929. During that time, besides praying as much as he could, he wanted to check whether what he had seen already existed in the Church (not only in Spain but also in other countries), in order to avoid setting up a new institution if one already existed that would carry out what he believed God was asking of him (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 7).

**-Page 42:** He claims that Escrivá was the boss of the other chaplain of the Foundation for the Sick (Norberto Rodríguez). In reality, they were both chaplains of the Foundation for the Sick on equal terms. The reason Rodríguez asked to be in the Work was not that he would be uncomfortable if he did not (Cf.

González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 9).

**-Page 42:** Gore states that in 1930 Escrivá decided to admit women in the face of the failure to get men into Opus Dei. This contradicts Escrivá's alleged passivity during these years ("Escrivá did surprisingly little ..." Gore writes just before). In reality, St Josemaría always affirmed that the arrival of women in Opus Dei was a light from God, not his wish. Moreover, the author confuses the charism with the institution. The charism in 1928 was for men and women, priests and laity. The members of the institution in 1928 were only men; in 1930 Escrivá understood that there would also be women (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, pages 6 and 9).

**-Page 42:** He points out that on "other days, he [Escrivá] thought about leaving the priesthood entirely," and that he "decided to forget about the Work of God and instead apply for a job as a civil servant." In order to "prove" this, Gore provides in the notes a reference to an official document in which St Josemaría appears among the candidates for a post in the state administration. But this document does not imply that St Josemaría was thinking of leaving the priesthood. In reality, St Josemaría never stopped praying and thinking about the Work of God, and he never considered leaving the priesthood, as his writings and the testimonies of the people who knew him at that time show. He was looking for a job that would give him stability in Madrid in order to develop the Work in the Spanish capital (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022,

Volume I, p. 13). There are many examples of priests who were engaged in civil professions at the time: without leaving the sphere of Escrivá's relations, in Saragossa his professor of Roman Law was a priest, and in Madrid the priest José Cicuéndez ran an academy.

**-Page 42:** He states of the founder in Madrid that "his life was comfortable." On the other hand, we know from many sources that the life of St Josemaría and his family in Madrid in the early 1930s was fraught with economic hardship. Between 1931 and 1934 he had no official salary, only the stipends given to him by the nuns of Santa Isabel (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 15).

**-Page 42:** The author claims that 2,500 pesetas a year (what St

Josemaría received) was a generous salary. This assertion is inaccurate, since this salary was a survival wage for a family. To support his thesis, he wrongly gives the salary of a waiter (notes, p. 324). But on the same web page he cites (which gives a table showing the wages of workers in Spain in 1929) it can be seen, for example, that a street sweeper had a daily wage of between 6.50 and 8.25 pesetas a day, and even higher was the wage of a railway foreman, a locksmith, a tram or bus driver and so many other categories of workers with a salary considerably higher than Escrivá's. These are minor details which may show an intention. You can access here this table from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics.

**-Page 43:** Referring to St Josemaría's work at the Santa Isabel Convent in 1931, he notes that "It was far from ideal—the position was temporary

and offered no pay, meaning a hit to the family's finances—but it would keep him out of the slums." It is true that this change of job meant going less often to those poor neighbourhoods, but the author neglects to say that it was then that he began to go continuously to hospitals for the infectious and the incurables, who were not visited by their families, and that he even joined a volunteer organisation (of the social work of St Vincent de Paul) for activities like these on Sunday afternoons (Cfr. Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 15).

**-Page 44:** He says that St Josemaría decided to open an academy "taking inspiration from the Jesuits," because they had just opened one. That inspiration would not have been a problem at all, but it was not like that, because the Jesuit academies

were aimed at pupils of their schools; the one St Josemaría opened was aimed at university students.

Moreover, the founder already had personal experience of academies because he worked in one, the Academia Cicuéndez in Madrid, and had previously taught in another, the Instituto Amado in Saragossa.

Moreover, the person who suggested that he open an academy was St Pedro Poveda, founder of the Teresians and a great friend of his (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 5).

**-Page 45:** It states that "during the first three months [of the DYA Academy], around a hundred students passed through its doors to attend classes." The author confuses the information. Few university students attended the classes. About a hundred young people had spiritual accompaniment or meetings

on Christian doctrine with Escrivá (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 29).

**-Page 46:** He notes that a document titled *Instruction Concerning the Supernatural Spirit of the Work of God*, "was the first of what eventually would become dozens of "instructions" totaling hundreds of pages, all written by the founder." Not so. The Founder's Instructions are actually six in number (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume II, p. 9). He also states that they "dictate every aspect of life within Opus Dei, controlling the daily activities of its members," which is not true. These documents, in fact, "offer concrete rules and guidelines in light of the substantial elements of the Work's message. They are intended to assist in the governance and development

of Opus Dei" (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History* (1928-2016), Scepter, New York 2022, Volume II, p. 9). As mentioned above, the project of publishing the complete works, which has already begun, includes the publication of the six Instructions.

**-Page 46:** The author argues that "right from the beginning, then, it was clear that Opus Dei was deeply political at its core; it was a reactionary stand against the progressive forces that were transforming society ... He wrote that "the movement was part of 'a rising militia' of 'apostles carrying out the orders of Christ.' His words were a rallying cry to young conservatives keen to defend the Church and roll back some of the progressive reforms of the last few years." This political narrative is false. Gore is keen to "prove" that Opus Dei, rather than obeying divine inspiration, obeyed

the founder's will to power given the particular situation in Spain in the early 1930s. He denies Opus Dei's supernatural spirit (confirmed by several popes, most recently Francis in the motu proprio "*Ad charisma tuendum*") and its universality (also confirmed by spread of Opus Dei's message to dozens of countries, cultures and social classes).

Paradoxically, what this Instruction says quite categorically is that Opus Dei did not come to solve the problems of the Spanish Church in the 1930s, nor the social situation of any specific nation (Cfr. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume I: The Early Years*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 2001, p. 443).

**-Page 46:** He says that the *Instruction concerning how to do proselytism* (to which we will return later) is a "secret manual for recruitment that would be hidden from the outside

world, including Vatican authorities." This is false. Escrivá never concealed these documents from the ecclesiastical authorities. Specifically at that time, he shared them with the Archbishop of Madrid, who knew well his apostolic work with young university students. Even though its usage today is very different, the founder understood proselytism "as the proclamation of Christ, the incorporation of new faithful into the Church and the concern to bring those he knew into Opus Dei freely, without coercion." In times closer to our own, the word proselytism is used, for example, by Marie-Dominique Chenu, in his 1957 book *La théologie au douzième siècle* (2nd edition, 1966, p. 231).

**-Page 47:** He states that the founder "ordered his followers to focus their efforts on young people and avoid anyone over the age of twenty-five, explaining that older people had a

tendency to be set in their ways—although perhaps it was simply that they were less susceptible to being recruited into what was increasingly looking like a religious cult." Once again Gore cherry-picks one part of reality and hides the other, to reinforce preconceived ideas. What he hides here is that in parallel to the meetings with university students, in the DYA Academy the founder had meetings with adult professionals and married people, who also gave academic advice to these young people (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 59).

**-Page 48:** Gore describes the spiritual plan of life of the people of the Work in the 1930s-40s: prayer times, Mass, rosary, angelus, spiritual reading, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and so on. He goes on to note: "This intensive program filled up a large

chunk of members' days, leaving them little time to actually go out and serve God through their everyday jobs—as they had been told they would." The fact is that this same life plan is what all Opus Dei members and many others around the world are practising today, in 2024, without neglecting their work (usually full-time) or their other duties. The author seems to assume the role of interpreter of charisms. Such a plan of life, compatible with the normal obligations of life (for example, those of a priest), is followed by many people who are not members of Opus Dei and by many people who belong to other institutions of the Church. St. John XXIII, in his *Diary of the Soul*, records the plan of life he lived from his time as a seminarian, which was no less absorbing.

**-Page 50:** He notes that the founder "decided to baptize the new chapel [of the university residence] with an

initiation ceremony for his small group of followers, which would mark their official incorporation into Opus Dei." In fact, the chapel was inaugurated with a Mass attended by 40 people, most of whom did not belong to the Work; even the owners of the flats were present. No one joined the Work that day (Cfr.

González Gullón, *DYA. La Academia y Residencia en la historia del Opus Dei (1933-1939)*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2016, pp. 321-322).

**-Page 50:** He considers it sinister that the definitive incorporation into Opus Dei was called "The Enslavement" in the 1930s: "Ominously, Escrivá named the ceremony 'The Enslavement'." This word was used in an evangelical context (for example, in the popular *Angelus* prayer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord"), is typical of the spiritual lexicon of the time, and is still used today by some religious

institutions. What Gore does not say is that the use of this term in Opus Dei lasted two years, from 1934 to 1936, and since then Escrivá replaced it with "fidelity," a term that seemed to him more akin to a lay spirituality and which is still used today to designate that incorporation (cf. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume I: The Early Years*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 2001, p. 419).

**-Page 51:** He claims that "The DYA residence and academy was rapidly becoming a booming line of business." He does not cite any source, because it would be impossible to justify. The reality is that DYA had no financial profits and what is on record are numerous moments of economic hardship (Cfr. González Gullón, DYA. La Academia y Residencia en la historia del Opus Dei 1933-1939, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2016).

**-Page 51:** He tells how before the civil war, "one of the DYA residents was arrested for his involvement in the botched assassination of a left-wing politician and was sent to prison. Following the incident, Escrivá introduced a new rule—any talk of politics was banned inside the residence. The move wasn't an attempt to condemn the attempted murder—indeed, he asked some of the residents to visit the assassin in prison—but instead a clear attempt to protect Opus Dei from any political fallout." Indeed, a resident was arrested for his involvement in that assassination attempt and this has long been in the public domain (cfr. González Gullón, *DYA. La Academia y Residencia en la historia del Opus Dei 1933-1939*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2016, pp. 480-488). However, to claim that "visiting the detainee in prison" implies "not condemning the crime," is a different assumption. The Church has always promoted visiting

the imprisoned as a work of mercy. In a certain sense, it would seem that in the author's mind, visiting someone in prison (which Pope Francis often does) means condoning the crime he has committed. On the other hand, the "attempt to protect Opus Dei from any political repercussions" makes no sense; the Work as an institution in 1936 was a tiny thing (about 10 people), with no relevance in ecclesiastical or political life.

**-Page 52:** He states that the founder "stipulated that the local directors were required to write everything down—including details about spiritual matters, everyday incidents within the residence, the personal details about residents' family and professional lives, as well as observations about their particular talents, skills, and interests." He adds that "these report cards would eventually evolve into the internal

'reports of conscience' that local directors would prepare for the regional headquarters, using information gleaned from members during the supposedly confidential spiritual guidance sessions—a mainstay of Opus Dei's control over its members' lives that would remain for decades to come."

The author's assertion is erroneous. In reality, the purpose of those notes was not control but the desire to better accompany the residents, without depending on the good will of a single person, and the notes he mentions were not reports "of conscience."

With the passage of time, even the reports that were prepared in the past for the successive incorporations of members into Opus Dei or in view of their call to the priesthood (similar to those made, for example, in a seminary) have

disappeared, and the type of information for making these decisions has been adjusted to the evolution in the Church and in society towards an even more delicate respect for conscience, which has also taken the form of specific guidelines that ensure the distinction between internal and external forum, or between the areas of formation and government (Cfr. For example, *Experiences in Formation at the Local Level*, 2022, p. 13: "What concerns the inner life of individuals always remains within the sphere of personal spiritual direction, without transcending into other spheres"; p. 8: "in [local council] meetings, matters of the inner life of individuals are not discussed"; etc.).

**-Page 54:** In the early days of the civil war, Gore states that Escrivá's flat was relatively safe. He shows ignorance of this aspect at that time,

as books on the civil war show, from all sides of the political spectrum. In fact, the founder fled his home on 9 August in the face of an imminent search by militiamen, since in those early days of the war the fact of being a priest was a reason for murder for the clergy of Madrid (Cf. González Gullón, *Escondidos. El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, p. 55).

**-Page 55:** He narrates that, from his home, Escrivá "went to the home of a young professor who frequented the DYB academy." The sources indicate that he went to the house of the parents of Manuel Sainz de los Terreros, a member of Opus Dei, who was not a teacher or a professor (Cf. *El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, p. 56.)

**-Page 55:** He states that, in the refuge in the psychiatric sanatorium, "it was unclear which patients were genuinely ill and which were feigning their illness." In fact, it is well documented that Escrivá knew from the beginning who had a psychiatric illness and who did not, and offered his priestly ministry to whoever asked for it (Cf. González Gullón, *Escondidos. El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, pp. 116-117).

**-Page 56:** Regarding the refuge in the Honduran Legation, Gore says that "Again, it's unclear where the money came from" to cover the stay of Escrivá and those who accompanied him. He does not offer any hypotheses to resolve this supposed mystery. But we know from historical documents that the members of the Work had two bank accounts at the beginning of the

Spanish Civil War and that one of them contained 40,000 pesetas in deposits that were used during the period spent in hiding in the legation in Honduras (Cfr González Gullón, *Escondidos. El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, p. 223).

**-Page 56:** He writes that "In May, the priest, his brother, and the three Opus Dei members were given a room of their own" in the Honduran Legation. In fact there were four, apart from his brother Santiago (Cf. González Gullón, *Escondidos. El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, pp. 159-165).

**-Page 56:** Gore maintains that "Trapped inside the consulate, unable to go outside, after a few months Escrivá's mental health started to deteriorate." This is a

conjecture that he presents as a conclusive fact without providing any documentary data. However, reading the accounts of the other refugees in the legation at Honduras (most of whom were not Opus Dei members), it seems clear that this was not the case: the young priest preached a daily spiritual talk to them, proposed a plan of study and leisure, encouraged them to pray and keep fit, etc. (Cf. González Gullón, *Escondidos. El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, p. 199). The aforementioned source gathers abundant testimonies of refugees, for whom St Josemaría was a strong point to lean on and to keep their spirits and hopes up at that time. He would hardly have been so without mental health.

**-Page 57:** Gore takes up Fisac's opinion that he was invited to join the escape plan through the Pyrenees

because his father could contribute money. In the documented historical reconstruction by José Luis González Gullón (Cfr. *Escondidos*, 314), and in a biography written by Alfredo Méndiz (*Tomás Alvira*, 102), it is made clear how much everything cost and how the expenses were distributed (everyone paid their own way, although some certainly had to borrow money). Biographer José Miguel Cejas also details as follows the cost of the escape across the Pyrenees: *"In those war years, the estimated average cost of crossing the Pyrenees was around 1,200 pesetas per person, plus extras. This money came mainly from the professional salaries and savings of four of them: José María Albareda and Tomás Alvira, high school teachers; Juan Jiménez Vargas, a doctor; and Manuel Sainz de los Terreros, an engineer. Three of the expedition members were students: Pedro Casciaro, Miguel Fisac and Francisco Botella, and the*

*families of the latter two paid their expenses. The families of Sainz de los Terreros and Jiménez Vargas also collaborated. Other members of the Work in Madrid contributed something, such as the engineer Isidoro Zorzano and José María González Barredo, a secondary school teacher. To this was added the little that remained of the money earmarked for the installation in July 1936 of the new Ferraz residence, which could not be built because of the conflict. In spite of everything, the sum of unforeseen events meant that the eight expedition members could not cover the expenses, and for this reason, on arriving in Andorra, they left the last of their guides owing 5,400 pesetas.*" (Cf. González Gullón, *Escondidos. El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, p. 314; Alfredo Méndiz, *Tomás Alvira: Vida de un educador*, Madrid, Rialp 2022, p. 102).

**-Page 57:** He says that during the crossing of the Pyrenees "They slept at safe houses pre-arranged by the smugglers and they breakfasted on hearty meals of bread, wine, and sausages." Of the five days they spent walking in the Pyrenees, they never stayed in safe places or houses, and only once did a family feed them in a Catalan farmhouse (cf. *El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid 2018, p. 359). Moreover, it is known from the available sources that the roads were guarded and detention implied death. This is something that both Francoist propaganda—the Causa General—and anarchist propaganda say. See for example: *Nacionalistas contra anarquistas en la Cerdanya (1936-1937)*, by Agustín Guillamón and Antonio Gascón, Editorial Descontrol, Barcelona 2018. On a website extolling the figure of Antonio Martín Escudero

(1895-1937), an anarchist active in Puigcerdà during the war, one reads an account of these deaths. In this link you can even find a photo of the sheet of the Causa General).

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### ***Chapter 3. An autograph from the pope (pp. 60-80)***

**-Page 61-62:** He mentions a certain "Jorge Maciá Masbagá, known to everyone as Jordi." There was no member of the Work with that name in Barcelona. Given the dates, he refers to Joan Masià Mas-Bagà. Quoting Fernández de la Mora as a source (*Semblanza de Luis Valls-Taberner*, p. 4), he states: "Just as the founder had instructed, Jordi made an effort to separate Luis from his peers." This is false. The founder did

not give any such instruction, and the source quoted does not say so either.

**-Page 63:** He uses Walsh's book (full of factual errors, as can be read in the final part of this article of the time) to describe Spanish political history. Gore's claim that the political measures of the Spanish post-war period played "into the hands of Opus Dei and its prewar years of experience running a student residence" is not credible. The reality is that the only pre-war experience had been the DYA Residence, a house for 25 students, which began in 1934 and was forced to close in 1936, because of the war. On the other hand, he presents the university residences as "Escrivá's business model," when in fact they were more of an economic burden for St Josemaría, which he set out to carry out with his self-sacrifice and generosity and with the collaboration

of many friends. For example, the installation of the Jenner Residence, which was set up after the war for some forty people, was at the cost of many sacrifices and the request for loans whose repayment was always precarious (Cf. Jaume Aurell, "Jenner, residencia universitaria," in *Diccionario de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Ed. Carmelo, p. 682).

**-Page 63:** The author quotes the book by González Gullón and Coverdale (*Opus Dei: a history*, p. 62) as a source for statements that do not appear in that text. He argues that "the founder took full advantage of his packed dorms to recruit for Opus Dei, reviving his system of report cards, which he consulted continuously to tailor and hone his recruitment methods." In 1944 there was only the Moncloa Residence and it was not "overcrowded": it had capacity for 90 residents but was not full. In addition, the source he quotes deals

with ideas that St Josemaría transmitted to the first members of the Work to explain the reality of Opus Dei when they travelled outside of Madrid. What we read on p. 62 of González Gullón and Coverdale is: "The explanation they gave of Opus Dei followed a set plan. They invited them to study or carry out their professional work well, to maintain a personal relationship with God, and to cultivate friendship. At the end of each trip, to facilitate continuity, they prepared a brief overall report and a card with information about each of the students and professional men they had met."

**-Page 65:** After disparaging the book "The Way," citing several points out of context, he observes that "many of the maxims were utterly banal." Despite the banality detected by Gore, "The Way" is the fourth most translated Spanish book in history, behind "Don Quixote" and two works

by García Márquez, according to the Instituto Cervantes' World Map of Translation.

- **Page 65:** He says of St Josemaría:

*"He moved his mother, sister Carmen, and brother Santiago in [to Diego de León, the new Opus Dei centre], too, which raised eyebrows among some, who asked why they were living there when they weren't even members. 'That's their business,' responded Escrivá, who said that the Escrivá family revered God in their own way."*

Gore has again misrepresented the words of his source. What you read in this biography by Andrés Vázquez de Prada, is:

*It may have been 1944 when a student living in Diego de León one day asked the founder why Carmen and Santiago were not members of Opus Dei. "That is their business. Ask them if you like," he replied. But the question has a*

*simple answer: Carmen and Santiago were not called to be members of the Work but to collaborate in their own ways.*

(Cf. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume II: God and Daring*, Scepter Publishers, New York, 2003, p. 408).

Moreover, the statement that it "raised eyebrows" that the mother and brothers lived with the founder seems contrary to the reality of the facts that they all called the founder's mother "grandmother" and the sister "Aunt Carmen" because of the affection they had for them and because they thought that was their proper place in Opus Dei (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 88).

**-Page 65-66:** He mentions that "Escrivá began to draw up 'instructions' for a new class of

membership: married men and women, who might live at home with their families and hold normal jobs, but who nonetheless would be critical members of the 'mobilization of souls' who would take back control of the 'paganized world'." In quoting the Founder's Instructions, he selects the words that suit his narrative, leaving out their spiritual and ecclesial context. Beyond this, it is worth clarifying that not only the supernumeraries of Opus Dei—to whom he is referring—have "normal jobs," but that all lay members of Opus Dei, men and women (numeraries, associates and supernumeraries) have to live from their "normal jobs." Only a few, by exception, may be called upon to carry out tasks of government or coordination of the apostolates, for a period of time.

**-Page 66:** Referring to the married members of Opus Dei, he states that

"this new breed of supernumeraries would require its own, separate system of manipulation and control to ensure it worked that would eventually be enforced by a sprawling army of numeraries." In several interviews Gore has defined himself as non-Catholic and non-religious, and this perhaps exempts him from certain responsibilities to fully understand the nature of a spiritual and ecclesial vocation in the midst of the world. But it should not exempt him from respect in dealing with the free and personal choices of others.

**-Page 67:** The author maintains that around 1941 "Escrivá concluded that the time had come to seek ecclesiastical cover. He began to cultivate a relationship with the Bishop of Madrid, and he asked him to consider officially approving Opus Dei as a 'pious union'." In fact, the first meeting between Bishop Eijo

and Escrivá took place two years earlier, on 2 September 1939, and lasted five hours. Moreover, Escrivá did not ask the bishop for anything, it was the other way round. In order to avoid the misunderstandings that existed in ecclesiastical circles about Opus Dei, Bishop Eijo in March 1940 "suggested that Escrivá ask for canonical approval" (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, pp. 61 and 66).

**Page 67:** Gore maintains that "Escrivá sent [the bishop] documents outlining what Opus Dei was—while omitting the detailed 'instructions' that dictated precisely what went on inside the movement" and quotes in Notes "op. cit., p. 98." In fact, in González Gullón and Coverdale's *Opus Dei: A History*, Volume I, (p. 66 in the English version), it says that Escrivá sought advice from "the diocesan expert on canon law, Fr José

María Bueno Monreal" and that Bishop Eijo "approved Opus Dei as a pious union, with Statutes made up of six documents (Regulations, Governance, *Ordo*, Customs, Spirit and Ceremonies)." At no time does the book state that Escrivá omitted the instructions. It is precisely the documents with which this approval was given that regulate the life of the members, whereas the instructions have no juridical character. On the other hand, the instructions are not hidden documents: although unpublished, they have always been used in the formation of the members.

**-Page 67:** He speaks of "a strategy to hide its real workings from the wider Catholic Church, a practice that continues to this day." Gore provides no sources to back up this falsehood. Opus Dei has handed over all its documents to the Holy See in the successive legal steps it has taken.

The accusation of "secrecy" against Opus Dei was already familiar to the bishop of Madrid-Alcalá, who "gave Escrivá his unconditional support" (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, p. 61).

**-Page 68:** With tortuous reasoning, the book explains that Escrivá "realized that regular contact with priests outside the movement threatened his authority over and control of the membership. The only solution was to have priests of his own. He began preparing some of his most loyal members for ordination." This statement is false and is not supported by any document. Escrivá asked other priests to hear the confessions of members so that he himself would not be bound by the sacrament when talking with them. Priests like the Augustinian José López Ortiz in Madrid or Sebastián

Cirac in Barcelona were always good friends of the founder, both when they heard the confessions of the members and later, when there were already other priests who had come from within the Work (Cf. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume II: God and Daring*, Scepter Publishers, New York, 2003, pp. 432 and 468). Moreover, at least since 1936, there is no record of any problems of obedience to the founder because of the actions or advice of any of these priests. Gore's later interpretation of priests in the Work as a means of "control" of its members is nonsense.

**-Page 69:** We read that "Opus Dei now had its first priests, although Escrivá made it clear that they were not to use the title "Father," which was to be reserved exclusively for him. Instead, all priests were to use "Don," a generic term of respect." This is false. During St Josemaría's

lifetime all priests of Opus Dei in Latin America, or in English or French speaking countries, were addressed as "padre," "father" or "abbé." In Spain the use of "padre" was more common among the religious clergy; with the Spanish priests of the Work they used "don," "mossèn" or similar because they were secular priests. The usual treatment used for Escrivá was also "don." In this case, the noun "father" was used familiarly because of his status as head of the Work, as founder, and not because of his priesthood.

**-Page 69:** He states that "young members like Luis [Valls Taberner] were fed the line that Opus Dei was the embodiment of a vision clearly laid out in the Bible." While it is not clear exactly what Gore means, this idea is not found in any of the founder's writings.

**-Page 69:** He writes that "the founder told them that they were the foot soldiers, serving a much greater mission to transform the world into something altogether more wholesome and devout," but these statements are not to be found in the source he indicates. The statement that does appear in the aforementioned Instruction of the founder ("You and I work effectively at the command of a King—Jesus Christ—and we try to get soldiers to enlist in the army of our God") provides a better context for the idea.

**-Page 70:** He states that "by gaining pontifical approval, Opus Dei would automatically have the green light to expand to anywhere it wished. It would be a real game changer, effectively allowing the movement to operate outside the Church's traditional hierarchy." The reality is that all universal institutions in the

Catholic Church require pontifical authorisation and such approval does not mean operating outside the traditional hierarchy of the Church, but rather the opposite. In fact, Opus Dei does not operate in any territory without the approval of the local bishop.

**-Page 70:** In recounting St Josemaría's first trip and arrival in Rome in 1946, Gore transforms the founder's overnight prayer vigil in front of St Peter's Square into a narcissist's aspirations for glory: "occasionally, he looked up at the lit window of the pope's private library and dreamed of the great future ahead." He backs up the "fact" in the notes, by quoting Vázquez de Prada, who tells a completely different story. The author of *Opus* feels capable of entering Escrivá's mind, knowing his most intimate intentions and converting them into facts that

contradict the testimony of those who witnessed the event.

**-Page 71:** He refers in a particularly derogatory way to the vocation of the assistant numeraries: They "were uneducated women from poor backgrounds, who had been employed as domestic staff at the various Opus Dei residences and were gradually recruited to join by the superior numerary members. Escrivá saw this new underclass as vital to creating a more rarefied atmosphere within the residences, making the numerary members feel even more special." Once again, Gore invents an intention and records it as fact.

- It is not clear what is meant by uneducated women from poor families. At that time, university students in Spain accounted for less than 15% of the female population and 35% of those

enrolled in high school. Many women from rural areas moved to work in the cities, mainly in industry and domestic service. The latter sector underwent a progressive feminisation during the 20th century. In Barcelona, for example, women working in domestic service made up 9.5% of the total working population in 1940 and 13.8% in 1950; in terms of the division between men and women in this sector, 88.8% were women in 1940.

When they married, some women continued to work and others devoted themselves to their homes. What Gore criticises, then, was the life of a majority of women at the time (see, for example, Helena Saavedra's study on "Universidad y patrones de género en el primer franquismo. Continuidades y rupturas en la enseñanza

universitaria: alumnas, doctoras y profesoras," the volume of the Journal of Iberoamerican Population Studies on "Domestic service in Spain, XVIII-XX centuries. A research agenda" or David Cobo's research on "Women's education in Spain in the last two centuries").

- Only some of the women who worked in the university residences felt this call. Gore presents as a proven fact the intention he attributes to the founder regarding the role of women, which there is no way of proving. On the other hand, it is documented that what moved St Josemaría in this and other aspects was the consideration of the Work as a family and the role of some women in helping to create a family atmosphere in the centres where its members live (Cf. González

Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume I, Chapter 5, pp. 82-92).

- It is regrettable that Gore considers these people to be "lower class," and indirectly belittles both their work and their personal choice of service in caring for people.

**-Page 72:** He notes that "it didn't take [the founder] long to hone his political skills to help expedite the process [of papal approval]. He began to pitch Opus Dei as a critical organ in the Vatican's own fight against Marxism." There is no evidence for this, beyond the predictable position of a priest regarding an ideology contrary to religion.

**-Pages 71-72:** Gore uses the testimony of a person who allegedly heard St Josemaría say that he

considered it "impossible" that the Nazis had killed six million Jews, to convey the false idea of denialism. In reality, St Josemaría's opinion of Hitler is clear and there are numerous direct testimonies. These are some of his expressions: "I have always found Hitler to be an obsessive, a wretch, a tyrant," "Nazism is a heresy, apart from being a political aberration," "I know that there have been many victims of Nazism, and I regret it. It was enough for me that there had been only one —for reasons of faith and, moreover, of the people—to condemn this system," etc.

**-Page 72:** He states that after approval as a secular institute in 1947, "the founder celebrated by buying a former palace that he had seen just a few days before. He renamed it Villa Tevere, after the river that flowed through the city." The purchase of Villa Tevere was not

to celebrate pontifical approval, but was the result of a long search for the headquarters of Opus Dei, following the advice of the Sostituto of the Secretariate of State in the Vatican to move the headquarters to Rome. The original house is a "villa," although the author uses "palace" perhaps because "palazzo" is the generic term used in Italian for "building." On the other hand, St Josemaría did not just see it and buy it, but spent more than a year looking for a suitable location. The acquisition process was long and complicated, as can be read in various sources and in [this article](#). The process involved, among other people, Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, then Substitute of the Vatican Secretariat of State, later Pope Paul VI.

**-Page 75:** He refers to the relationship of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) with people from Opus Dei. And he

ventures—without sources—that "by the time of Luis [Valls Taberner]'s appointment, the Research Council had effectively been captured by Opus Dei, which bled the institution dry of state funds at a time of acute need to rebuild the country." He goes on to state that "by 1949, when Luis started his job at the Research Council, the institution was overrun with members of Opus Dei, all paid salaries using public money." This is a surprising statement because there are no studies on the number of members of the Work who belonged to the CSIC. Some data that have been studied indicate that in the first half of the 1940s, the CSIC granted 167 scholarships; in the second half, about 700; the number of young Opus Dei members who went abroad with a CSIC scholarship was 11 in the first half and about 20 in the second half (Cf. Federico Requena, Fernando Crovetto, "Salir de España entre la guerra mundial y la guerra fría. La

expansión del Opus Dei en los años cuarenta," *Studia et Documenta*, 2020, pp. 367-368). On the other hand, it is not serious to claim that the State diverted public money from the CSIC to the 'coffers' of Opus Dei without any documentary evidence.

**-Page 76:** In discussing the Work's headquarters in Rome, among other misrepresentations of reality, it is stated that "some of that money went toward the construction of accommodations and office space for the growing movement, but vast sums were also spent on deluxe accommodations for Escrivá. The original palace, where Escrivá lived apart from the other members, had two new floors added, which placed such a stress on the structure that additional support had to be added." There are no references to this in the text he cites as a source (Alfredo

Méndiz, "Orígenes y primera historia de Villa Tevere," p. 205).

- The "deluxe accommodations for Escrivá" is pure fantasy: his bedroom was narrow, with tiles on one of the walls as almost the only decoration (it is described in detail by Vázquez de Prada (cf. *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume III: The Divine Ways of the Earth*, Scepter Publishers, New York, p. 322); the bed was simple, and until the 1960s it did not even have a bedspread (Vázquez de Prada, *Volume III*, p. 218); moreover, his room wasn't in the two upper floors that were added, but rather on the first floor (Cf. Vázquez de Prada, *Volume III*).
- St Josemaría did not live separately from the other members: quite a few other people lived in the original building (among them, from

1949, Del Portillo, Canals and Taboada; and a bit later all the directors of the General Council, that is, about a dozen people). More importantly, the students of the Roman College of the Holy Cross of those years, who lived in Villa Tevere, testify that they very often had the opportunity to meet him, for example at the after-dinner get-together, practically every day (Cfr, for example, Rafael Gómez Pérez, *Trabajando junto al Beato Josemaría*, Madrid, Rialp, 1994, p. 81; Alfredo Méndiz, "Orígenes y primera historia de Villa Tevere. Los edificios de la sede central del Opus Dei en Roma 1947-1960," *Studia et Documenta*, Rome, 11, 2017, pp. 153-225.)

**-Page 76-77:** Gore states that "with such enormous expenses, it soon became apparent that profits from

the student residences and the numeraries' wages wouldn't be enough to support the movement. Escrivá had already taken a huge step toward diversifying his revenue sources by finally signing off on the admission of supernumeraries at the beginning of 1948. After more than a decade of prevaricating about when would be the right time to admit married people, evidently the purchase of Villa Tevere a few months earlier had forced his hand." Gore offers no source for this alleged financial motivation of St Josemaría, beyond his conjecture which he turns into a self-evident fact. Obviously, there is no record of it in the founder's papers.

**-Page 78:** The author describes the real motivations of Luis Valls to alleviate the financial needs of the Work after a trip to Rome, and then notes that he "was granted a visa to enter Andorra." From obtaining the

visa, the author deduces a "strong indication" that he "was now being entrusted with secret missions to smuggle money over the border." Then, on the basis of Moncada's book (*Historia Oral del Opus Dei*), he takes as a fact the organisation of criminal activity: "A system was established whereby members would cross borders into Andorra, France, or Portugal with large sums in cash hidden under their clothes or in their luggage. ... Such smuggling was at great personal risk to the individuals themselves. They could easily have been thrown in prison." He makes the accusation without sources. On this subject, Francisco Aparicio (Luis Valls' closest collaborator in recent years), explains the following: "We have no information to know the reasons why Luis Valls applied for a visa for Andorra, but it is not surprising that he did so, as his family always had links with the Principality: his father, in addition to

being a scholar of Andorran legislation, from 1916 until his death (1939) held the post of Judge of Appeals of the Principality of Andorra" (Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 10-10-2024; cfr. also the voice Ferran Valls i Taberner in Viquipèdia, consulted on 8-11-2024).

**-Page 78 and following:** On the motivations of Luis Valls to help the apostolates promoted by St Josemaría and other members of Opus Dei, Francisco Aparicio, who was his closest collaborator and advisor to the foundations he promoted during his lifetime, explains:

*"At the beginning of the 1950s, Opus Dei began to expand, especially in Spain, at the same time as apostolic work began in other countries and the construction of the headquarters in Rome. As an administrator, Luis Valls promoted and took part in various*

*initiatives to obtain the financial means to meet this expansion: for example, the installation of residences, the construction of halls of residence, and the construction of colleges and the Opus Dei headquarters. The economic needs of this expansion accumulated, and the great majority of the members of Opus Dei at that time were students who had hardly any income and little possibility of generating it. Luis took on this task with a great sense of responsibility. He felt these needs as his own, and solving the economic hardships faced by those at the head of each apostolate became one of his main occupations, to which he devoted a lot of time and put his good head to find solutions.*

*To this end, he approached several financial institutions as a client. His approach to Banco Popular Español, of which his cousin Félix Millet was chairman, was more profound and he*

*ended up focusing professionally on the Bank, of which he was appointed executive vice-president in 1957. Talking about a bank in 1957 is not the same as talking about a bank today: in 1974, despite the mergers that had taken place, there were more than two hundred banks in Spain, not counting foreign institutions and those of a different nature, such as the savings banks. This relationship with Banco Popular, which was to last throughout his life, not only enabled him to develop his professional project, but also to seek financing for certain initiatives and to encourage the rest of the Bank's Board to find a way to assume the Bank's social responsibility.*

*In order to support Opus Dei's apostolates from the Foundations, Luis Valls applied the general criteria that governed the social action promoted by the Bank, in particular the principle was not to give away, but*

*to finance through loans. This had two advantages: firstly, it ensured that the projects were economically viable (capable of repaying the loan) and, secondly, it then used the repayments for new loans, thus multiplying its effectiveness."*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 10-10-2024).

**-Page 80:** The author mentions as if it were a rarity that numeraries "lived in single-sex residences." This is the usual arrangement for people in any institution of the Church with a vocation to celibacy.

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## ***Chapter 4. Not a thing of this world (pp. 81-98)***

**-Page 81-98:** The chapter refers to the alleged "assault" of Opus Dei on Banco Popular. His main source are two books by Alberto Moncada (a former member and one of its main critics) from the 1980s and 1990s. Both have been superseded by subsequent bibliography on the bank and on Opus Dei. Moncada's book itself is called "Oral History" because it lacks documentary sources. Gore takes this text as the basis for false claims or misrepresentations. We reiterate that Opus Dei has never owned a bank or intervened in its governance. The fact that Luis Valls Taberner and some of the people he brought into his project were members of Opus Dei, as is reported in numerous sources, is something completely different. It would be similar to attributing to a diocese or religious association any professional

action of the respective faithful. The fact that these same people have helped numerous initiatives of human and spiritual formation, social development, etc., speaks of their generosity and personal philanthropy. Gore's approach creates a false narrative, inventing a secret "hidden hand" that controls every step.

**-Page 81-83:** In the opening pages of the chapter on the alleged "coup [at the bank] that the small Opus Dei group was planning" he hardly mentions any specific names and almost nothing is verifiable: using Moncada as a source, he speaks, for example, of a director of the institution who supposedly received spiritual guidance from Opus Dei, of a numerary, of his fellow Opus Dei members, of one of the men who set in motion the first phase of the plan, of people who knew his secret, of the first man, etc. Later he will speak of

friendly faces. His story is built on nameless characters, on insinuations that in most cases are impossible to verify.

**-Page 83:** He mentions the auxiliary societies linked to Opus Dei that existed in the 1950s and 1960s. He states generically that they became "a vast conglomerate with tentacles extended to every part of society." And he goes so far as to state that the institution "even set up its own business department to oversee this growing network," which he defines as "the sprawling Opus Dei business empire" (p. 84), "to generate funds to finance Escrivá's ambitions" (p. 93). The reality is that the so-called common works and auxiliary societies were attempts to promote and support initiatives with an evangelising purpose in the fields of education, communication and entertainment, and social aid. There was never a "business department,"

as Gore claims. The founder himself stopped this type of "collective apostolic action" in 1966 (common works) and 1969 (auxiliary societies). The evolution and reasons for the discontinuation of these initiatives are explained here.

**-Page 83-84:** In an attempt to portray lawyer Sol Rosenblatt as a sinister figure, Gore omits any reference to the lawyer's solid credentials. For example, from 1936 to 1942, Rosenblatt was general counsel of the Democratic National Committee (Cf. Rosenblatt's obituary in *The New York Times*, 5 May 1968).

**-Page 84-85:** There are numerous statements such as "what the Work wanted most was a bank of its own" or "Opus Dei now had day-to-day control of Popular." The author's insistence on attributing to Opus Dei any action or attitude of any of its members in a personal capacity is

striking. He also keeps taking for granted, without foundation, Opus Dei's aims of power and control.

**-Page 85:** The author says that, in 1954, "As word of all this maneuvering—and of Luis' role in it—reached Rome, Escriva rewarded him by promoting the twenty eight year old to 'elector,' granting him a seat on the governing council tasked with voting on any major changes to the Work and determining who would succeed Escriva when the time came." Such a correlation is pure fantasy: 13 other electors from various countries were appointed on the same date, and the letter Gore cites as a source is the same as the one sent to each of the 14 new electors, with identical wording, except for the name of the person concerned. Moreover, it is not clear what Gore means here by the phrase "the governing council." If this term refers to the General Council of the

Work, it should be made clear that Valls-Taberner was a member of this advisory body from 1950 to 1956; in other words, the supposed "reward" would have arrived four years before the eventual "action worthy of a prize." In contrast, from 1956 to 1961 he became a member of the Spanish regional commission, which in Gore's terminology of power would in any case be a "demotion."

**-Page 85:** The author states that "The purchase [of a portion of the bank's shares] totaling five million pesetas was made by a company called Eolo, one of two vehicles set up by some Opus Dei members a few years earlier to spearhead the movement's plans to move into construction and transport." Eolo had no connection with Opus Dei, beyond the possible involvement of members of the Work in a personal capacity, as ordinary citizens who can engage in any honest professional work. One of

Luis Valls' closest collaborators has explained the following:

*"The fact that the company EOLO obtained financing from Banco Popular to buy or subscribe shares in the bank itself is neither irregular nor unusual: it is so-called 'financial assistance,' permitted in the ordinary way, then without any restriction and now specifically provided for banks and financial institutions (cf. Article 150.3 of the Capital Companies Act). Apart from the fact that the operation has nothing unusual about it, the author attributes to Opus Dei or its members a capacity to act above the bank's directors (who are responsible for authorising and signing such operations) which is misplaced."*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 20-10-2024).

**-Page 88:** When he mentions a letter from Escrivá to Franco, the author selects the paragraph in which the

founder uses the protocol language of the time and interprets it as flattery, without taking into account the historical context of the moment. In reality, the same could be done with any letter or text from a Spanish ecclesiastic of the time. To give an example, Cardinal Tarancón (president of the Spanish Bishops Conference at the time), on the death of Franco—in a much more open context, many years after Escrivá's letter—referred to Franco as "the faithful son of the Church" and said he was "pained by the death of someone whom we sincerely esteem and admire." In the homily of 20 November 1975 (the day of Franco's death) he said, among many other things:

*"I believe that no one will hesitate to recognise here with me the absolute dedication, the obsession, I would even say, with which Francisco Franco devoted himself to work for Spain, for*

*the spiritual and material aggrandisement of our country, even to the neglect of his own life. This service to the Fatherland—as I have already said on another occasion—is also another religious virtue."*

(The reader can find it here).

Three days later, the Cardinal Primate of Spain, Marcelo González Martín, said:

*"Let the light of gratitude shine on the immense legacy of positive realities that this exceptional man has left us, the gratitude that the people are expressing and that we all owe him: civil society and the Church, youth and adults, social justice and culture extended to all sectors. Remembering and thanking him will never be an unacceptable immobility, but a stimulating fidelity, simply because nations are not made in a day, and everything that can be improved tomorrow will find the roots of its*

*development in what has been done yesterday and today in the midst of so many difficulties."*

(This homily can be read here).

**-Page 88:** Citing Moncada as the only source, he presents other false descriptions such as this: "Following the government appointments he ordered that all Opus Dei ministers were to come personally to receive him whenever he came back to Spain. The requirement was inconvenient enough when the founder flew into Barajas airport just north of the capital. But he occasionally traveled back to Spain through France by car, forcing three of the busiest and most powerful men in the country to drop everything and drive five hours north to the border at Irún."

This is false: neither the founder gave this supposed order nor did the aforementioned ministers ever go to

receive him. The General Archives of the Prelature do contain accounts of two trips in which the founder entered Spain via Irún (9/9/1960 and 17/7/1964), but the person accompanying him there was not a political authority but the then-Counsellor of Opus Dei in Spain, Florencio Sánchez Bella.

**-Page 89:** A stay of Escrivá in Pamplona is mentioned, on the occasion of the establishment of the University of Navarre, and Gore states that "Opus Dei members roamed the streets singing songs and chanting 'Long live Father Escrivá!'." The Internet source mentioned by the author in the note is not accessible ("No results. We have not found any results, try a new search," says the search engine of the newspaper *La Vanguardia*). A search in the correct document (*La Vanguardia*, 26 October 1960) shows no reference to these cheers, as

confirmed by eyewitnesses (Clarification of the architect Cesar Ortiz, who accompanied St Josemaría that day, and of Javier Cotelo, who was also there, 22 November 2024).

**-Page 89:** It is worth mentioning the misinterpretation that he often makes of phrases of the founder. An example:

*"In one missive he warned his colleagues against using their reason to understand the world around them. 'In our interactions and in social professional and family life we must turn to a more transcendental and at the same time more simplified idea—that of faith,' he wrote."*

Obviously, the founder never "warned his colleagues against using their reason," and in fact, what he says is something different which is universally accepted by any person of faith. Once again, Gore appends his interpretative tagline: "While

blind faith may have been a cornerstone of Opus Dei..." To the contrary, Escrivá is one of the authors of spirituality who has dealt the most with the subject of study, professional work, citizenship, etc., and his message is a source of inspiration for thousands of people who work with their reason: teachers, researchers, scientists, scholars, artists, etc. This anti-reason view is irreconcilable with his message. To those who wish to form a Catholic and universal mentality, Escrivá advises the following:

*"a breadth of vision and a vigorous endeavour to study more deeply the things that are permanently alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy; a proper and healthy desire, which should never be frivolous, to present anew the standard teachings of traditional thought in philosophy and the interpretation of history...; a careful attention to trends in science*

*and contemporary thought; and a positive and open attitude towards the current changes in society and in ways of living."*

(Josemaría Escrivá, *Furrow*, 428).

**-Pages 89-90:** Gore gives value to any source that is critical of Opus Dei, such as the Spanish Falange, if they serve to reinforce his narrative. An example: "Falange began a campaign to expose this hidden financing network." "On the streets of Madrid pamphlets began to appear detailing how Escrivá's followers had built a sprawling web of business interests." "To the Falange the ministerial receptions at the border [invented by the Falange] were confirmation that the Opus Dei men in government answered not to the Caudillo but to another authority entirely." (p. 89)

As is well known, in the face of continuous attacks by the Falange at that time, Opus Dei insisted publicly

and repeatedly on the political and economic autonomy of its members.

In 1966, the founder of Opus Dei himself was forced to publicly demand respect for the institution from the Falange, with an open letter to Minister José Solís (of the Falange) that was not published in any of the regime's newspapers (you can read it here).

A year later, Monsignor Escrivà said in an interview with the American magazine Time: *"I don't like to say so, because I naturally love my country deeply, but it is in Spain that we have had the greatest difficulties in making the Work take root. No sooner had it been born, than it met with the opposition of all the enemies of personal freedom and of people who were so attached to traditional ideas that they could not understand the life of the members of Opus Dei, ordinary Christians who strive to live their*

*Christian vocation fully without leaving the world" (Cf. interview by Peter Forbath, Time correspondent in Rome, 15-4-1967).*

**-Page 91:** In an endnote, he mentions María del Carmen Tapia as the source of Escrivá's alleged bad temper. A few years later, when Tapia was asked by the ANSA Agency, she replied: "I never considered his strong character as an obstacle to his sanctity and subsequent canonisation" (Cfr. Agenzia Ansa, 24-12-2001, Document 20011224 00643, ZCZC0113/SXA R CRO S0A QBXB). Then on 25 January 2002, the journalist Frances d'Emilio (Associated Press) specifically asked María del Carmen Tapia this question about the character of St Josemaría: "One other question: you have been quoted as saying Escrivá threw temper tantrums. If that is accurate, what would set off these fits of ill-temper?"

Ms Tapia's response was as follows:

*For a few, to be a saint, means meeting a person with a soft character, sweet and peaceful, with a life full of suffering, and with a personality where not a slightest error might be spotted. For this reason, I fully understand why the profile of Monsignor Escrivá does not fit (for them) into that frame. His character was passionate, strong and impulsive, a clear representation of the characteristic personality of the people from Aragón, a province in Spain, --where the small town of Barbastro was his birthplace.*

*The responsibility he assumed in front of God, (I would call it his "fiat!") to start an institution such as Opus Dei, forced his personality to reach a tremendous tension and stress to the point in which, when he realized that something was not done in accordance with what he understood*

*as a divine message, his reactions were quick and forceful; even, rude at times, typical of a rude Aragonese.*

*This way of reacting could be interpreted, in a familiar language, as temper tantrums, often the result of a too quick and spontaneous reaction. I have heard him raising his voice to the point of leaving a person speechless, as I also saw him sometimes asking forgiveness to the person whom he thought might have been hurt because of his earlier and strong reaction. Other times, he conveyed expressly, through someone of his entourage, a word of consolation to those who, in his mind, he thought he had hurt because of his impulsive reaction. I also saw him, at a particular moment, with the suffering of not being able to control his spontaneous, quick and sometimes hard reactions as he would have wished to do and saying that God would be as merciful as to forgive him*

*for his many imperfections. I must say as well that Mons. Escrivá had a profound, exemplary and notorious devotion to the Madonna.*

*I must also say --because otherwise I would be very unjust-- that precisely because of his passionate and strong character he knew very well how to fulfil the soul of the most demanding people and in the most delightful way."*

**-Page 91:** In the same note, Gore refers to Vladimir Felzmann as "Escriva's personal assistant in the early sixties." In reality Felzmann was just a student of the Roman College of the Holy Cross, along with some two hundred university students of various nationalities.

**-Page 91:** Gore interprets Opus Dei's early financial needs and the search for funds and donations as an unhealthy lust for money and wealth. Citing Moncada's "oral

history" again, he states for example that "members were asked to come up with lists of people who could be swindled." Certainly, many times in the apostolic initiatives of the Work and of almost all the institutions with a social service purpose, financial campaigns have been and are promoted to obtain donations. To speak of them as "swindling" is simply an insult. To give an example, without the help of such contributions, there would simply be no such institutions as the University of Notre Dame, Georgetown University or any of the pontifical universities that exist in Rome today.

**-Page 92:** The author states that "Luis [Valls Taberner] had allowed Opus Dei to bleed Popular dry, saddling the bank with huge amounts of debt and then using the money to fund its various projects." The question is: what has Opus Dei got to do with all this? To refer to Opus Dei as the

cause of the bank's indebtedness is nonsense, and in the financial sphere:

*"A bank's indebtedness, as every financier knows, is healthy: indebtedness is the proper thing for a bank, taking on debt and granting loans financed with that debt, not with its own resources. Furthermore, the figures he gives on the evolution of the bank's indebtedness are incorrect: the author could have solved this by researching the bank's archives to which he had access and which he consulted; for the evolution of the bank's balance sheet, see the History of Banco Popular by Tortella et al, p. 418. It shows how he uses serious sources to support false information."*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 20-10-2024).

**-Page 93:** He mentions that Opus Dei's membership "had climbed to about six thousand people across six

continents." And he boldly adds that "Such rapid geographical expansion had never been seen before in almost two thousand years of Christendom perhaps because nobody else had access to such large amounts of cash or the convenience of the airplane." From the very origins of Christianity we know that three thousand people were baptised in a single day (Acts of the Apostles, 2:41). In the history of the Church there are numerous institutions that have grown faster than Opus Dei. But, once again, accuracy is not important in constructing a narrative of dominance and power.

**-Page 93:** He claims that St Josemaría "told his followers to begin collecting artifacts connected to his life." When the reader goes to the source of this curious assertion—the source used is the biography of Josemaría Escrivá by the historian Andrés Vázquez de Prada—he discovers that it is non-

existent. In other words, he uses a rigorous source to support a false statement that is not to be found in that source.

**-Page 97:** We read: "Opus Dei doctors were encouraged to medicate fellow numeraries who were having doubts about their membership." It's another statement unsupported by evidence. If a doctor prescribes medication for a patient, it is because he is suffering from an illness that makes it advisable, regardless of whether he belongs to this or that institution, or whether he has vocational, matrimonial or any other kind of doubts. The fact that on some occasion several of these factors (illness, doubts, etc.) may have concurred does not justify drawing such a conclusion, which would be a reportable medical malpractice.

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## ***Chapter 5. Because I say so (pp. 99-118)***

**-Pages 99-118:** At the centre of chapter 5 of the book "Opus" are some episodes involving María del Carmen Tapia (deceased in 2016). It should be made clear that Tapia's book dates from 1992, the year of the beatification of St Josemaría, and that it was extensively contradicted by eyewitnesses to the events described therein.

Gore takes Tapia's account at face value without checking the rebuttals. He could have located the public statements that the author herself circulated in 2001 and 2002. Particularly significant is the clarification she made through the ANSA agency on 23 December 2001, shortly after the announcement of the approval of the miracle allowing

the canonisation of Monsignor Escrivá:

*"With regard to a dispatch from the ANSA news agency on 20 December 2001, and given that the information does not reflect my thoughts, I would like to state that:*

*My attitude towards the Church has always been one of filial love for each and every one of its representatives. I have always been and continue to be a practising Catholic.*

*I knew personally and worked with Monsignor José María Escrivá for many years of my life and in that work I always understood that his commitment and focus was the good of the Church and of souls. And it was equally clear to me that he had been an instrument of God to make Opus Dei a reality in the world.*

*During the years of my stay in Opus Dei I worked with all my commitment*

*and zeal for the apostolate and the good of souls, and I tried to follow and spread the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei.*

*The foreseeable successful conclusion of the canonisation of Monsignor Escrivá has been a source of joy for me, since I personally entrusted myself to him on many occasions after his death. The fact that he had a strong character I never considered it an impediment to his sanctity and subsequent canonisation.*

*As in any institution made up of human beings, mistakes can be made. The book I wrote contains one of them, of which I am sure that, in addition to myself, the founder himself was an unwitting victim when he was misinformed about me. Therefore, it would be another new and serious error to use the information in my book to cast doubt on the sanctity of the founder of Opus Dei when what I*

*wanted to express refers to some very specific actions, in my opinion unjust, committed by certain leaders of the Institution at that time, and which I accepted to publish so that such events would not happen again."*

*María del Carmen Tapia*

*Santa Barbara, 23 December 2001*

(Cf. Ansa, 24-12-2001, Document 20011224 00643, ZCZC0113 SXA R CRO SOA QBXB)

**Page. 100:** He maintains that "Escrivá had chosen the palace as his personal living quarters, where his suite of rooms included an office, a chapel for the sole use of the founder—and a private dining room." A more accurate description of St Josemaría's room is found in Vázquez de Prada's biography, Volume III, p. 322 and p. 218.

**-Page 107:** Gore says that Wynnview is "a ski chalet in Vermont." The reality is that it is an old farmhouse with a barn converted to house bunk beds.

**-Page 102:** Based on a book by Walsh (which cites no source) he points to the slander that, upon hearing the news of Paul VI's election, Escriva had accused the new pope of being a Freemason and predicted that all those who had elected him would go to hell. Obviously, Gore cannot give any names. What is known from direct sources is that as soon as he was elected, St Josemaria celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving for the new Pope, and together with Alvaro del Portillo recalled several of the moments he had spent with Cardinal Montini. St Josemaría often recalled his first meetings with the future Pope Paul VI: "The first words of affection and encouragement I heard in Rome," he wrote, "were those of

Bishop Giovanni Battista Montini" (cf. Cosimo di Fazio, "Blessed Paul VI, St Josemaría and Blessed Álvaro," *Romana* no. 59, Rome, December 2014; on the relationship between the two saints, see also this article). The reaction of gratitude on the day of the election is described in detail in: Javier Medina Bayo, "Álvaro del Portillo, un hombre fiel," Rialp, Madrid 2012, pp. 396-397. On the other hand, on 24 January 1964, the founder had his first audience with Paul VI, assured him of the prayers of the whole Work for the good progress of the Council and spoke with the Pope about the juridical situation of Opus Dei (Cfr. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016), Volume II*, Scepter Publishers, Inc., New York, 2022, p. 88).

**-Page 102:** He refers to a Swiss theologian who allegedly dismissed the book *The Way* as a "handbook for

senior scouts," and presents the theologian as critical of Opus Dei. But Gore does not refer to the later clarifications to this comment that the same theologian would later make on various occasions, in various books, such as that of the journalist Vittorio Messori: "In 1963," writes von Balthasar in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, "I had the impression that the advice and exhortations contained in *The Way* could not suffice as a spiritual foundation for such an influential organisation, spread throughout the world." And he concludes, responding to those who portrayed him as critical of this institution of the Church: "Many of the accusations (including those that the article in your newspaper alleges against the teaching of religion by members of Opus Dei) are simply false and anti-clerical."

**-Page 104-105:** Gore refers to alleged microphones "that the founder had installed in many areas of the complex" [Villa Tevere] and that such devices "were connected to his private quarters and allowed him to listen in on members' private conversations." The reality is that, according to Javier Cotelo, the architect of that house, both when they were installed and when they were removed, "the devices, perfectly visible and known, were installed only in the oratory of the Holy Family and in the main living room of the house, which were two public places." At the time, Villa Tevere was home to the Roman College, where more than 150 university students lived. Cotelo adds: "With these devices, if the Father wanted to say something to the students of the Colegio Romano, he could do it easily by this means, from the area where he worked" (Clarification by Javier

Cotelo, 6-11-2024). For another explanation of how these were devices in plain view, not hidden, and installed in large, public places, not in private places such as offices, living rooms or bedrooms, see Pilar Urbano, *The Man of Villa Tevere*, Scepter 2011, p. 84, which also refers to those in Villa Sachetti. In an interview given by Gore for the promotion of his book, these "listening devices" have morphed into spying "cameras." Gore claims: "Sometimes (Escrivá) went too far, for example, putting cameras to spy on people working for him in Villa Tevere, the Opus headquarters in Rome." This statement is also completely false.

**-Page 105 and ff.:** Gore relates other events referred to in María del Carmen Tapia's book that are, in fact, incompatible with the statements she herself made in 2002, or those she made to the journalist John Allen. As

explained above, Gore refrains from quoting from these documents.

**-Page 111:** "Escrivá had an audience with Pope Paul VI, where he pled his case for granting Opus Dei some higher status within the Church." This is false: what St Josemaría was seeking, as his source relates (see note), was not a higher status but a juridical configuration more in keeping with the secular charism of Opus Dei (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume II, pp. 88-89).

**P. 111:** He makes the preposterous claim that "It dawned on Escrivá that Rome might be unwilling to show him the respect and import he felt he deserved, and he began to ponder drastic measures: a complete rupture with the Catholic Church. In 1967, he sent Del Portillo to Greece to see whether he might bring the

movement into the Orthodox Church." The author uses as his source a *Newsweek article* of 12-1-1992, written by Kenneth L. Woodward (see note).

The statement that Escrivá feared that "Rome might be unwilling to show him the respect and import he felt he deserved" is the fruit of Gore's fantasy and does not even appear in the *Newsweek* article. On the other hand, there was only one trip to Greece, in 1966, with the knowledge of the Holy See, to which St Josemaría, Blessed Álvaro Del Portillo and Javier Echevarría went together. Blessed Alvaro's trip to Greece in 1967 is also an invention of Gore. The fact is that the only purpose of this trip was to go on pilgrimage to the places that St Paul had travelled and to explore the possibilities of Opus Dei beginning its stable activity there. St Josemaría did not meet with any Orthodox

authorities. After returning from Greece, on the other hand, he wrote to the Vatican authorities (cf. Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume III*, p. 345, footnote 96, and also *The Man of Villa Tevere*, Scepter 2011, pp 84-86).

**-Page 111:** Mention is made of "a number of senior departures," that is, several people who left the Work ("heavy hitters," it says a little further on), specifically Antonio Pérez, Raimon Panikkar, Carmen Tapia and Miguel Fisac. The variety of situations of the four mentioned does not allow us to speak of "senior departures" or "heavy hitters" (neither Panikkar nor Fisac held posts of government within Opus Dei). What is clear is that whoever wants to leave, leaves, something that belies the supposed mixture of brainwashing and blackmail with which Gore describes how members are incorporated.

When talking about the departure of Antonio Pérez, he says that Escrivá asked him to keep quiet: "As he did with Tapia, Escrivá probably threatened to use his influence within the Franco regime and the Spanish business world to make his life a misery if he disobeyed." Once again, the facts give rise to a new invention.

**-Page 113:** Gore states that "the founder was once again being treated for his diabetes, which had supposedly been miraculously cured years earlier." The basis on which he relies is an anonymous source quoting another anonymous source (see note). The reality is that—as has been published for years—although he was cured of diabetes after the anaphylactic shock, St Josemaría was left with lifelong consequences and therefore had to follow a diet and other preventive guidelines. These data can be found, for example, in an

article published by the doctors who treated him for long periods at the Clínica de la Universidad de Navarra, where they point out that since the 1954 episode "from that time onwards, he never took insulin again." And, on the same page: "As a consequence of the diabetes, he had developed a kidney disease (diabetic nephropathy) which led to kidney failure that progressed until the end of his life" (Cfr. "Blessed be the pain! Medical aspects of the biography of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá," in *Scripta Theologica* 34, 2002/2, 605-621), p. 607.

Cf. also *Opus Dei: a history*, Volume I, page 147, where it is noted: "He recovered from the attack, and his doctor found that he had been inexplicably cured of diabetes. Although he would suffer for the rest of his life from some consequences of diabetes, especially kidney

insufficiency, he did not need insulin any more."

**-Page 113-114:** The author refers to what Banco Popular—and supposedly Opus Dei—would have done with the money from Matesa (giving credence to a book by Jesús Ynfante from the 1970s that has been largely debunked by later sources) and concludes that funds were allocated to "countless other projects, including Richard Nixon's election campaign." Again: the reality is that Opus Dei has no affiliated banks. In these pages, the reader has the impression of being in a work of fiction. And, in fact, the note on which it is based is again from the aforementioned text by Hutchison, the same author of "In the Tracks of the Yeti" (1989), a book in which Hutchison narrates how he supposedly discovered proof of the existence of the abominable snowman.

**-Page 114:** It says that Franco "had formed a new government: of the nineteen ministers announced to the nation that evening, ten were allied with Opus Dei." Gore does not back this up with any source in the Notes. The fact that Gore has access to, but does not give, is that in that government only 3 of the 19 ministers belonged to Opus Dei. Specifically: Gregorio López-Bravo (1962-1973), Laureano López Rodó (1965-1974) and Vicente Mortes (1969-1973) (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume II, p. 116).

**Pages 114-115:** Misrepresenting his source (González Gullón, Coverdale) and adding home-grown adjectives, he states that "Accusations had been swirling around the Vatican for some time that the movement had begun to openly challenge the pope's authority. The new commission

would bring Opus Dei back into line by settling the question of its status within the Church hierarchy once and for all, and by unilaterally rewriting the movement's constitution. To his horror, Escrivá discovered that three of the five of the cardinals being proposed to oversee the commission were openly hostile to the movement." And then Gore goes on to say that to head off the challenge, Escrivá asked the Holy See for permission to convene an extraordinary general congress of its members during which they would revise their statutes in accordance with the Second Vatican Council. But if the reader goes to the original source it becomes clear that the five members of that commission were not cardinals: "At the proposal of the prefect of the Congregation for Religious, Cardinal Antoniutti, a special commission had been created to study the canonical situation of Opus Dei and to modify its

Constitutions. The commission was composed of five people, three of whom—Father Ramón Bidagor and Monsignors Sotero Sanz Villalba and Achille Glorieux—were notoriously opposed to Opus Dei" (Cf. González Gullón, Coverdale, *Opus Dei: A History (1928-2016)*, Scepter, New York 2022, Volume II, p. 93). On the other hand, the dynamics and purpose of that extraordinary general congress are described in detail and documented in: A. de Fuenmayor, V. Gómez-Iglesias and J. L. Illanes, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei. The History and Defense of a Charism*, Scepter-Princeton and MTF-Chicago, 1994: Chapter IX: The Special General Congress.

**-Page 115:** Regarding the Second Vatican Council, and again misrepresenting the source, Gore states: "Among his followers, [the founder] shared his despair at the changes ushered in by Pope Paul VI,

which had updated the liturgy, given a larger role to the laity, and allowed priests to perform worship in languages other than Latin for the first time. Escrivá banned Opus Dei priests from implementing many of the changes, a significant riposte to pontifical authority" (citing as a source González Gullón Coverdale, *Historia del Opus Dei*, Rialp, Madrid 2021, *op. cit.*, p. 383).

On the acceptance of "the changes introduced by Pope Paul VI, which had updated the liturgy," cf. Álvaro del Portillo - Cesare Cavalleri, "Immersed in God. Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei as seen by his successor, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo," Scepter, Princeton, 1996, pp. 111-113: "he obediently and wholeheartedly carried out all of the council's instructions"; although later, without requesting it, he was granted permission from the Vatican

to return to celebrating the Mass using the previous rite.

On the changes introduced by Pope Paul VI, which had "given a more important role to the laity": Escrivá himself said, shortly after the end of the Council: "one of my greatest joys was to see the Second Vatican Council so clearly proclaim the divine vocation of the laity" (Conversations, n. 72).

Regarding the acceptance of the changes introduced by Pope Paul VI, which had "allowed priests for the first time to celebrate worship in languages other than Latin," it is clear that González Gullón and Coverdale do not say that he prohibited the application of the changes, which would have made him a schismatic, but that, among other indications on how to apply them, "he established that Latin should be used at Mass when only

people of the Work were present," something perfectly legitimate, and which implied the acceptance of the new missal.

**-Page 116:** He relies on an article by María Eugenia Ossandón to say something that does not appear in that article: "Occasionally during [St Josemaría's catechetical trip to Latin America], a former member or worried relative of a current member would openly challenge him —but such altercations would be edited out." Once again, he uses the technique of distorting the facts: from an episode told by a reliable source, he invents new "information that does not appear in that source and which is false. In fact, there are thousands of eyewitnesses to these meetings, and St Josemaría was not afraid of direct contact with the people, but quite the contrary (Cfr. María Eugenia Ossandón Viuda, "Josemaría Escrivá in Santiago de

Chile (1974)," in *Studia et Documenta*, Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá, Rome, 2017, 11, p. 130).

**-Page 117:** Again, Gore presents as fact his preconceived notion of St Josemaría's intentions: "In private," he imaginatively asserts, "he also sent out missives to the membership bemoaning the state of the Church—fueled by his anger and frustration over the pope's refusal to grant him the recognition that he craved." He refers in particular to the "the three 'Campanadas' missives that he sent out between 1973 and 1974" (see note). The reality is that these three letters have nothing to do with the juridical situation of the Work. On the other hand, the so-called "Campanadas" were not private letters but addressed to all members of Opus Dei.

**-Page 117:** Speaking of St Josemaría, he notes that "His ego was appeased

somewhat by the construction of an enormous shrine in the Pyrenean foothills—supposedly dedicated to the Virgin who had saved his life when he was a toddler, but really a monument to Escrivá himself and the movement he had built." There are no sources to back up what he claims. As in the previous case, he enters into the interiority of someone else's thought, invents an idea that fits his narrative, and offers it as a fact with no evidence to support it.

**-Page 117:** Gore states: "Just before midnight on June 26, 1975, the founder collapsed in his rooms at Villa Tevere. ... A call was put through ordering that the numerary servants in the adjoining building be woken up and sent straight to the chapel, where they were to pray for an urgent intervention from heaven." This is false. It is well known that St Josemaría died shortly before midday on 26 June and

obviously neither the assistant numeraries nor anyone else were dragged out of bed. The author uses as his source a letter from Alvaro del Portillo to the members of Opus Dei, recounting the founder's last moments, which Gore has misread.

**-Page 118:** The chapter concludes with sentences that combine disinformation and speculation, again departing from all journalistic and documentary standards. It mentions Franco as if he had been a pillar of Opus Dei, something which, as has been argued in previous points, is completely false. Referring to the founder and Franco, he states that "In less than five months, Opus Dei had lost the two figures who had made possible its phenomenal spread across the world. Cast adrift, with the Vatican openly hostile to the movement, it faced an uncertain future."

## ***Chapter 6. Habemus papam (pp. 119-138)***

**-Pp. 119-120:** After describing the friendship between the future Pope John Paul II and Monsignor Del Portillo, Gore explains that the Cardinal went to dinner at Opus Dei headquarters and "that evening, Wojtyła and Del Portillo knelt in silence before [Escriva's] tomb and prayed for his soul—and for the Church." In a note to this chapter, Gore asserts that Opus Dei does not say whether Cardinal Wojtyła and Monsignor Del Portillo both visited the tomb. It would have sufficed for Gore to consult this public article to have the complete chronology of all the meetings between the two men, and thus be spared any uncertainty.

As we read there, Cardinal Wojtyla made two visits to Villa Tevere at the time: one on 5 November 1977 (in which they both prayed at the tomb of the founder of Opus Dei) and another on 17 August 1978. On this second occasion, they went to pray in the oratory of the Holy Trinity. Del Portillo invited the Archbishop of Krakow to kneel on a kneeler that had been used by both Pius VII and St. Pius X, but Cardinal Wojtyla instead knelt on the floor and kissed the kneeler (among other sources, cf. María Eugenia Ossandón, "Un calendario de encuentros entre Álvaro del Portillo y Juan Pablo II," *Studia et Documenta*, 9, Rome 2015, pp. 145-201; Javier Medina Bayo, *Álvaro del Portillo, un hombre fiel*, Rialp, Madrid 2012, p. 467).

**-Page 124:** According to Gore, Banco Popular was having problems legitimising the transfer of money to Opus Dei, and was losing the support

of the government, as had been seen with the "Matesa case." The author adds that the Bank set up the Fundación Hispánica so that the channelling of funds could become "official." According to him, the Foundation received 5% of the Bank's profits and in the 1970s it had already received the equivalent of 140 million euros. We offer the following clarification from one of the founders of the Fundación Hispánica:

*"The reality is that the practice of the social action of the Popular has its origins in the 1950s of the last century. The funds came from the directors themselves waiving their statutory allowances. They were approved by the Bank, entirely legitimate from the outset, and without the need for any support from the national government. The author makes an unfounded association with an economic scandal of the time*

*involving a Catalan industrialist, which has no connection with Banco Popular or with the person of Luis Valls.*

*Furthermore, the figures given for contributions to the foundations are false. There were three foundations that were capitalised mainly with donations from the Bank: Hispánica, Vasconia (today integrated in Hispánica) and Fundación para Atenciones Sociales. The other foundations were capitalised with donations from their founders or third parties and with inheritances, such as Fomento de Fundaciones or Patronato Universitario.*

*From the beginning of social action in the 1950s to the present day, the total amount received from the Bank by these three Foundations (Hispánica, Vasconia and Atenciones Sociales) has been 543 million euros over a period of some 70 years. In addition, they*

*have received resources from other donors, inheritances, and asset management, amounting to almost 180 million.*

*Logically, what was received from Banco Popular was related to the bank's economic performance: in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, the amount received by all foundations was around 22 million per year. From 2007 until the resolution of the bank, it was around 7-8 million on average. This has represented between 1% and 5% of the Bank's profits; figures very similar to those allocated by other listed companies for corporate social responsibility purposes.*

*With these resources, the three foundations have provided donations and grants of 208 million and loans of 557 million. Ninety per cent of these loans have been fully repaid and the remaining 10 per cent are still being*

*repaid. In 2023, 62 million remained outstanding."*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 17-11-2024. All figures in Euros).

**-Page 124:** Gore claims that Popular's advisers were vaguely informed about the aid to the foundations. He also claims that "millions of dollars were spent on a huge school-building program all across Spain, as well as funding a holiday camp for children run by Opus Dei priests and numeraries." He does not provide any source for the "millions of dollars" spent on building schools, as the footnote on which the author bases his assertion refers exclusively to summer camps.

On the other hand, according to Francisco Aparicio:

*"It sounds strange and not at all credible that schools are being built with funding from the Fundación*

*Hispánica: since its inception, the Foundation has always avoided funding schools in Spain.*

*The camp is irrelevant: it refers to 'Las Cabañas,' in Soto del Real, as the same author cites in the footnotes. Specifically, this Association was granted a loan in 1977 for the equivalent of 120,000€ at the beginning of its activity, which was fully repaid.*

*The Bank's directors and shareholders were aware of the amounts earmarked for social action and the specific projects financed. Since the 1950s, the Bank began to make contributions to foundations, allocating to these entities and social activities the remuneration that its directors ceased to receive, and these foundations took on the task of attending to, studying and channelling the requests for aid or assistance that reached the Bank or its directors.*

*Until 1980, the Fundación Hispánica was almost the sole recipient of the Bank's contributions. Subsequently, others were incorporated, and since 1981 almost all the Bank's social action has been channelled through the Fundación para Atenciones Sociales and through the Fondo Social de Cooperación (Fundación Vasconia). All this is duly accredited in the Bank's minutes and in the annual accounts approved by the Shareholders' Meeting, which are published, audited and submitted to the regulator. An annual "Social Action Report" was published and made available to directors and interested parties, as the author himself mentions, among others, for 1982 and 1995.*

*For example, the Board meeting held on 22 April 2008 included on its agenda the presentation of the Social Responsibility Policy which was attached as an appendix. This*

*document gives a history of the Bank's social action over the years, how the social action of similar entities is understood at the same time, and includes, among other things, the following resolutions:*

- a) To rename the historic Fundación Hispánica as Fundación Grupo Banco Popular, although it may retain its original name when deemed necessary. ... Currently, their assets amount to 23 million euros, of which almost half consists of loans to debtors who will, over time, be able to repay the help they received.*
- b) In order to establish a sphere of action that reflects the Bank's corporate sentiment, an agreement shall be signed between the Bank and the Foundation that includes the fundamental lines of social action expressed herein.*

*This agreement remained in force until the Bank's dissolution in 2017. In*

*summary, the foundations that received aid from the Bank were Fundación Hispánica from 1970 to 1980 and from 2008 to 2016; the interval from 1981 to 2007 was Fundación para Atenciones Sociales, now part of Fundación Patronato Universitario."*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 17-11-2024).

**-Page 125:** Gore says that Opus Dei saw The Heights School as "an effective model" for generating profits. This is false for multiple reasons. First, the school is not owned by Opus Dei. Secondly, the author has little knowledge or research on the financial management of private schools in general, and The Heights in particular, otherwise he could not have come to this conclusion. Paradoxically, later on, he says that

the school was on the verge of bankruptcy (p. 160).

**-Page 133:** Gore says that "The discovery of a male corpse would soon cast a shadow over Wojtyła's motives and raise questions about Opus Dei's involvement in the circumstances surrounding the man's death." Gore takes as certain the supposed involvement of the Work in the tragic death of Roberto Calvi. Gore uses this assumption to claim that John Paul II transformed the Work into a personal prelature to protect and shield Opus Dei from potential fallout. The truth is that Opus Dei had nothing to do with Calvi, as was explained above and categorically denied in the communiqués at the time). No one has ever provided any proof for this allegation (Gore himself states in the *Introduction* that it is a "legend," although he then relies on it to fabricate a fact). And all this had

nothing to do with the decision of John Paul II to transform the Work into a personal prelature. When "facts" are supported by "legends" they are conjectures, theories, but not facts.

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## ***Chapter 7. Blessed Day (pp. 139-158)***

**-Page 139:** Gore states that once the new canonical status was achieved, members of the Work began to call Bishop Alvaro del Portillo "prelate." The reality is that members of the Work continued to use the familiar term "father." The title of "prelate" applies to the head of a prelature, and is logically used in formal and informative documents.

**Pages 141-142:** The author again raises non-existent problems about the entities and foundations that support the educational initiatives promoted by members of Opus Dei, as if they were a way of avoiding legal responsibilities. In this regard, we refer to what was explained in number 3 of "Response to Gareth Gore's book 'Opus' published by Simon & Schuster in October 2024," on Finances and Foundations.

**-Page 142:** It states that [these entities or foundations] "were able to draw on their report cards of local supernumeraries and sympathetic Catholics, which included detailed information on their personal, professional, and spiritual lives." This is false. Such report cards do not exist, and would violate foundation laws regarding personal data management. It is astounding that such a claim would be put forward without documentary evidence.

**-Page 145:** Gore notes that the "erection of Opus Dei as a personal prelature had been rushed through by Pope John Paul II in the final weeks of 1982, through a papal decree that unilaterally approved its application before the relevant canon laws governing personal prelatures had been finalized." The reality is that the erection of Opus Dei into a personal prelature was not a "unilateral" nor a "hasty" decision by John Paul II. It was a long and painstaking process. The final stage by the Holy See took two years and ten months.

Opus Dei's first request to the Holy See for a change in the juridical framework dates from 1962 (*The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, p. 314). After the Council, in 1969, Paul VI advised St Josemaría to convene a general congress to begin studies to transform Opus Dei into a personal Prelature. The specific request for

the establishment of Opus Dei as a personal prelature (possible only after the Second Vatican Council, which created the juridical figure) is dated 2 February 1979 (*ibid.* p. 574). In response to this request, John Paul II approved in November 1979 the establishment of a Joint Study Commission (made up of experts from the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Opus Dei) which met 25 times over the course of a year (from February 1980 to February 1981) and published a final report of 600 pages (*ibid.* p. 407), which was submitted for examination and deliberation by a Commission of Cardinals. Before making a final decision, John Paul II wanted all the bishops of the countries where Opus Dei was working at the time—"more than 2,000 bishops from thirty-nine nations" (*ibid.* p. 415)—to be informed and sent various documents, which was one of the most extensive acts of collegiality in

the recent history of the Church. Finally, Opus Dei was erected by John Paul II as a personal prelature by means of the bull "Ut sit" in 1982 (Cf. Marcello Costalunga, "L'erezione dell'Opus Dei in prellatura personale," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28-II-1982, p. 3 (a Spanish translation available [here](#))). For the long process of this transformation, see: A. de Fuenmayor, V. Gómez-Iglesias and J. L. Illanes, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei: The History and Defense of a Charism*, Scepter Publishers, Inc., Princeton, NJ, 1994.

**-Page 145:** The author argues that Álvaro del Portillo, after "the granting of Opus Dei's new status ... chose to cover up his mistakes by lying to the membership. They were told that, having taken vows, they were ecclesiastically bound to Opus Dei and could leave the movement only by obtaining a personal dispensation from the prelate

himself. This misleading interpretation of canon law would place a hold on the membership, forcing many to remain in Opus Dei because obtaining a dispensation from the prelate often proved lengthy or difficult. Effectively, it was a form of spiritual abuse."

This paragraph includes several falsehoods as well as showing ignorance of canon law. It does not mention any sources. The most glaring falsehood is to claim that Alvaro del Portillo lied to Opus Dei members and to say so without documentary support. The reality is that, as soon as the new status of prelature was approved, the vows that existed up to that time (because it was a Secular Institute) were no longer in effect for all members of Opus Dei. And among the many possible sources, we select this one, the day after the establishment of the prelature. Asked about the new

Statutes, Del Portillo replied: "The Statutes do away with the elements proper to Institutes of Consecrated Life—those relating to the *profession* of the evangelical counsels [vows]—which are outside the path that our founder saw in 1928, but which he had to incorporate into the particular law of Opus Dei, without ever wanting them, because this was required by the juridical regulations of Secular Institutes" (Cf. Interview with Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, ABC, Madrid 29-11-1982, p. 28).

**-Page 146:** "Opus Dei also routinely violated canon law regarding minors. The Church specifically prohibited the recruitment of anyone younger than eighteen." This is false. Gore cites as his source canons 97 and 98 of the Code of Canon Law, which define the age of majority, the rights of adults and the dependence of minors on parents or guardians. He seems to imply that a minor who

begins a process of vocational discernment in Opus Dei cedes these rights to Opus Dei. But Opus Dei does not intervene in what concerns parents and family decisions. The author confuses the age at which one can canonically make a commitment with the age at which one can consider a vocation: the Church encourages the creation of a climate where the question of one's vocation can be considered early.

For example, in canon 233 and 234, referring to the priesthood, it says that "Minor seminaries and other similar institutions should be maintained where they exist and encouraged, in which, for the purpose of promoting vocations, a special religious formation is given, together with humanistic and scientific instruction; and it is even desirable that the diocesan bishop, where he considers it opportune, should provide for the establishment

of a minor seminary or similar institution." Or in canon 643: minors under 18 years of age can be admitted to the novitiate. Gore states: "He explained that there was nothing to prevent children from becoming what he called 'aspirants'—a new category invented to get around Church restrictions." For accurate information on junior candidates see this article and this statement.

**-Page 146:** Gore alleges that a numerary sexually abused a minor at a youth activity. See notes. The Prelature of Opus Dei in the United States was not aware of this allegation until 2021, when a civil lawsuit was filed. The Prelature is following its Policy and Procedures Relating to Allegations of Abuse of Minors or Vulnerable Adults, but it is not a defendant in the case.

**-Pages 146-147:** In these pages—and in others throughout the book—he

mentions cases of sexual abuse by two lay people (like the one mentioned above), and by a priest. Opus Dei is very attentive to cases of abuse and therefore has protocols, working and prevention groups in each region, and has publicly asked for forgiveness every time a case has been verified, also following a path of reparation and healing.

We have no problem with these cases being discussed, and in fact the Prelature itself has commented on them in public statements, in agreement with the victims.

However, in recounting these cases, some assertions and connections are made that are false. On page 147, for example, Gore refers to another case of a married layman and says that it was never reported to the authorities by Opus Dei. The author fails to mention that the abuse occurred in the context of the family and that

until the victim went to the police, Opus Dei had had no knowledge of the case. By the time the Opus Dei authorities learned about the case, the police already had all the details of the accusation.

In any case, to eliminate any uncertainty on the issue of abuse, we wish to make clear that:

- Opus Dei does not feel immune to this plague, which has spread so painfully through society and the Church.
- The position of the Prelature is clear and is reflected in the general guidelines and the particular protocols published in each country.
- This is how the Opus Dei prelate talked about this crisis in an interview with the newspaper *El País* (26-6-2023):

*"This is very sad. In addition to underlining how regrettable these*

*abuses and crimes are (one alone causes a lot of pain!) I would also like to highlight the work done in recent years by the Pope and the Holy See through clear provisions: today, thank God, the universal Church and most Church institutions have protocols and guidelines to eradicate and effectively combat these abuses, which leave deep and sometimes unhealable wounds. The protocols of the Prelature, for example, date from 2013 and I myself updated them in 2020. They are a tool to raise awareness of the rights and needs of minors and vulnerable people, and thus avoid any risk of exploitation, sexual abuse or mistreatment in activities carried out in the centres of the Prelature, and we hope that they will also inspire all activities carried out in institutions that receive some kind of pastoral support from Opus Dei. By the mysteries of human nature, these kinds of instruments (in the Church and in society) are not a*

*guarantee that nothing bad will ever happen, but they certainly help to create a new culture and a clear reference: whoever commits a crime of this kind now knows where he stands."*

- The Prelature wants to ensure that we learn of any cases that may occur, and therefore has a channel for receiving reports for the investigation of child abuse in Opus Dei-related environments. These reports are submitted to the Child Protection Coordinator, who can be contacted as indicated on the Opus Dei website for each country or circumscription.

**-Pages 149-153:** He speaks about the philanthropic aid given by the foundations created by Luis Valls Taberner, which Gore always twistedly interprets in terms of

financing "recruitment" projects for Opus Dei. On these issues, the foundations themselves have made numerous explanations and clarifications, for example: "Origin of the foundations."

**-Page 150:** Gore writes: "While huge sums went into expanding the public face of Opus Dei—the schools, youth clubs, and student residences designed to entice future numeraries into the movement—an equally sizable amount was pumped into supporting the hidden underbelly of the prelature: recruiting underprivileged girls as numerary assistants, who were needed to cook and clean facilities in the sprawling network of new residences being planned by the prelate." This statement is false for several reasons:

- There has been no recruitment as described by the author. Without explaining the context,

he refers in a dishonest manner to socio-educational initiatives to which Opus Dei provided guidance and spiritual formation, such as ICIED (previously explained in relation to the author's statements on page 7, see above), which offered an opportunity for girls in vulnerable situations and without opportunities to continue their studies and, in addition, to provide technical training for a trade. These schools were completely public (they also appeared in the media) and were authorised and supervised by the state.

- The assistant numeraries are women who, sharing the same vocation as the other members of Opus Dei, in addition feel a specific call to care for and strengthen the family atmosphere of the centres.

- There is no hidden face of Opus Dei, but rather the author's ignorance of the vocation that is described in the statutes (Chapter II, 9), and of which there is a lot of information in all institutional channels (website, social networks, study articles in institutional bulletins, etc.), and there are also personal profiles of women who live this vocation and openly talk about it through their networks.

**-Page 151:** Introduces Catherine Tissier as "the first public whistleblower of the systematic abuse of numerary assistants." In addition to reiterating our sorrow for this person's suffering and our willingness to help her in any way we can, it is good to clarify that most of Tissier's complaints were rejected by the courts. Likewise, none of the former pupils and former assistant

numeraries invited by the Paris Correctional Court to become parties to the case and benefit from possible judgements chose to participate.

**-Pages 151-152:** He gives an account of Catherine Tissier's life, according to her complaint and other witnesses in the various judgments in the case. But he presents it as a "summary of facts," when what is read in the trial is clearly presented as "facts reported by Catherine Tissier," and are nuanced by words such as "declared," "specified," or "said." In other words, he takes for granted what is asserted in the proceedings, without these being proven facts. In fact, after more than ten years of investigation of the case, plus the subsequent sentences and appeals, the French justice system dismissed practically all of Tissier's complaints. The judgement of the Amiens Court of Cassation (Court of Appeal) only points to two offences of

concealment of hours worked by teachers and support staff (five people, including no assistant numerary), and the offence of remuneration contrary to the dignity of Catherine Tissier, because the school being unable to prove payment in cash years later and with the previous headmistress of the school deceased, she was granted the benefit of the doubt. The courts found that the state of weakness and vulnerability was true, but no abuse of that weakness could be found. The Amiens court concluded:

1. the education offered at the Dosnon Hotel School complied with the programmes of the National Equation and the standards in force in hospitality schools for education in that sector, and respected the legislation in force (pp. 14-16);
2. the Couvrelles International Centre was properly staffed and

the students could not be considered as real workers (pp. 31 and 3);

3. dismissed the charges of concealment of activity, concealment of salaried employment, failure to declare prior to employment, concealment of Catherine Tissier's hours worked, remuneration contrary to the dignity of the trainees;
4. of the €580,000 requested by the prosecution as compensation for damages on 7 grounds, the final judgement ordered ACUT to pay €26,918.

**-Page 151:** Gore asserts that Catherine Tissier "would later become the first public whistleblower of the systematic abuse of numerary assistants." It is true that she brought her complaints against Opus Dei to the legal authorities, and extensive

investigations were carried out by the police: searches, questionings of former students or staff of the ACUT association and the Dosnon school, questionings of former members of Opus Dei and/or their families, psychological expertise, hearings of experts (from the ministry, hotel and catering professionals, among others). However, the investigation concluded with a dismissal of all these accusations and Opus Dei was not summoned to appear in court (judgment of the Paris Court of Appeal of 16 December 2010).

**-Pages 152-153:** Gore states: "Rather than take responsibility, Opus Dei chose to hide behind the web of companies that had been set up in the country as a tax-efficient way of running its finances, and as a way of protecting the movement from any potential legal problems. During deliberations with the judge, Opus Dei successfully argued that it had

only been responsible for the spiritual formation of the young numerary assistants –and not for any breaches of labour law or alleged enslavement." However, this is not true: Opus Dei did not appear before the judges because the investigation showed that the accusations were unfounded (Order of referral to the Paris Correctional Court and partial dismissal of 22 July 2010, judgment of the Paris Court of Appeal of 16 December 2010) and it does not appear among the parties or the testimonies before the courts in 2011, 2012 or 2016. At no time was an Opus Dei official summoned, neither by the examining magistrate, nor before the courts that intervened.

**-Pages 152-153:** He maintains that the president of Banco Popular financed similar initiatives around the world, such as in Argentina, which would later allegedly be linked to abuses. He also says that other

facilities were set up in countries such as Belgium, Sweden and the Philippines. In the notes, Gore cites several foundations as recipients of these grants, but they are foundations that support a variety of initiatives: retreat and meeting houses, university residences, professional schools of various kinds, and so on. In a note for page 152 he adds that "more than 120 million pesetas were sent to the ICIED foundation" [720,000 euros], the women's centre to which he has already referred several times. See the report "Balance de Cooperación Internacional," AHBPE: extensive information can be found on the above-mentioned website.

Francisco Aparicio (board member of these foundations) explains:

*"If Banco Popular granted any loans to such institutions or any other vocational school, it would be a purely*

*commercial activity. Perhaps the author is not referring to the Bank, but to the Foundations (it appears that he is not very rigorous).*

*The Foundations have financed a variety of educational, social and welfare initiatives; some included hospitality among their studies; but obviously in all the aid provided over the years (€208 million in grants and €557 million in loans) hospitality schools have been very marginal.*

*Normally the Foundation does not receive a request for a hospitality school as such, but for the whole project (usually a conference centre); but of course the Foundation also finances vocational training activities as long as they are viable, have a relevant social impact and are able to repay the loans.*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio,  
17-11-2024).

**-Page 153:** We read that "Beneath the façade of these girls 'discovering' a vocation to serve God through domestic work lay a system of abuse and deception whose sole purpose was to generate a cheap—and at times entirely free—system of labour for Opus Dei residences around the world."

This assertion is not supported either by the data or by logic. Taking ICES as a reference: in 43 years of the institution's existence (1973-2016), the total number of female students was 1,080. Many of them entered the labour market, especially in the food, tourism and health sectors, and others developed their own businesses. Of the total (1,080), 140 students asked to be part of Opus Dei. ICES was a non-profit educational and social development initiative, in which a large amount of resources were invested thanks to the contributions of many people

and the State, which not only approved and supervised it, but also financed it, as it was considered a worthwhile initiative.

In short, these schools involved the effort of many people and large amounts of resources, which by any logic rules out the "cheap labour" purpose that the author falsely attributes to these initiatives. From a profitability point of view, it is obvious that it would be much cheaper to hire service staff locally where needed, than to organise and sustain such an educational institution.

**-Page 154:** It is particularly serious that Gore implies that Opus Dei engages in human trafficking, with phrases such as "The system of recruitment, grooming and transfer of girls and young women who joined Opus Dei as auxiliary numeraries would seem to fit that

definition" or "Although Opus Dei has never been accused of human trafficking, the testimonies of the girls and women recruited into this system of exploitation indicate that the practice was widespread."

Human trafficking is a heinous crime and those who have suffered from it deserve society's full support. To misapply the term in this context expresses a lack of sensitivity towards those who truly have been victims of this crime.

There are other aspects to be clarified with regard to what Gore claims in these pages. First, the statutes of the Prelature, approved by the Catholic Church in 1982, establish that no one can be a member of Opus Dei unless he or she is of age. Secondly, every vocation within Opus Dei is a personal choice. To become a member requires a path involving numerous stages, in each of which consent needs to be

expressed. All members of Opus Dei are members by their free choice. In this specific case, they chose the vocation of assistant numerary, which is a vocation approved by the Catholic Church. This choice of life requires expressing the desire explicitly, on multiple occasions and in writing. Every person has to reaffirm his or her desire to be a member at least 8 times, over a period of at least 6 and a half years. On the other hand there is no barrier to leave: anyone can leave at any time. Thirdly, with regard to transfers of city or country, assistant numeraries live out their availability in the same way as any other numerary, and this includes a willingness to move to where they can best collaborate with the aims of the Prelature, in dialogue with the directors. In the case of moving abroad, they would need to explicitly confirm their wish to do so. In many cases, if someone does not adapt to a

new culture or prefers it, they return to their own country. In most cases, however, it is valued as an opportunity and an enriching experience on a cultural, professional, apostolic, spiritual and personal level.

**-Page 154:** Gore maintains that "at the center of this was the numerary assistant department in Rome, which coordinated operations around the world, offering guidance on how the women recruited as numerary assistants were to be treated and managing logistics that determined where the girls would be sent." In Rome they receive requests for needs from the various circumscriptions of the prelature, or information from people who are willing to move to other countries (also in the numerary department, not just assistant numeraries). But that is a minor aspect of the work of this office. Gore's description of this process

("operations," "women recruited," "managing logistics") seems more apt for a spy movie than for a Church institution.

**Page 155:** He goes into (implausible) detail about the logistics of the beatification ceremony of Escrivá de Balaguer in 1992, including the transfer of his remains from the small crypt where they had rested since 1975 to the Basilica of San Eugenio: "The delicate operation," he writes, "had been closely overseen by the city's police department following a tip-off that terrorists from the Basque separatist group ETA were planning to kidnap his remains. While the threat never materialized, the information was a reminder of Opus Dei's dark past—of its complicity with the Franco regime and of lingering questions about the vast wealth it had amassed during the dictatorship."

The accompanying note refers to Robert Hutchison, *Their Kingdom Come*, a book that suffers from a notable lack of rigour. To get an idea, Hutchison presented Opus Dei as a Templar-inspired institution trying to remake the post-Communist world; an instrument of crusades against Islam, with arms trafficking activities in Germany, and other such theories. In a review at the time, Michael Joseph Gross stated: "He [Hutchison] leans too heavily on anonymous sources for his most scandalous accusations." Moreover, in the review published at the time by Publishers Weekly, it is stated: "While the book is packed with meticulous detail, Hutchison never weaves his findings into a coherent evaluative framework." (Despite this, Gore uses quite a few approaches from this book). In another of his books, "In the Tracks of the Yeti" (1989), Hutchison recounts how he supposedly discovered evidence

for the existence of the abominable snowman.

**-Page 155:** He states that the beatification ceremony was attended by 200,000 people. "Many had nothing to do with the prelature. As well as the hoards of tourists who regularly packed Saint Peter's Square, Opus Dei had tempted thousands of students from its universities who had no interest in the founder's beatification to travel to Rome by offering to heavily subsidize their trips." And in the notes he gives the source as: "Author interviews with University of Navarre students at the time, who were offered cut-rate trips to Rome coinciding with the beatification, despite having no desire to be involved with Opus Dei." Estimates for the number of people attending an event can vary. Nor are the reasons for attending always the same (to go to a beatification one

does not need to have any desire to be involved with Opus Dei), but the paragraph and the note show that the author never misses an opportunity to show reality in a biased way, always in the service of his prejudices. For example, during a ceremony in St. Peter's Square it is not possible to be there sightseeing: access is reserved for those taking part, with the appropriate ticket.

**-Page 155:** Another made up fact related to the ceremony of the beatification: "Also in attendance was Mother Teresa, whose popularity was the envy of the conservative wing that now so dominated the Vatican." For some reason, he has invented the presence of Holy Mother Teresa of Calcutta in the square on 17 May 1992, but it is an easily verifiable fact that she did not attend that event. No reference is given.

**-Page 156:** On Escrivá's beatification process, Gore argues that "Opus Dei had begun the process well before the statutory five-year waiting period, hiring a team to put together the paperwork and compile a list of possible miracles." In this way he reinforces the idea, given throughout the book, that Opus Dei ignores canon law whenever it suits it. Nevertheless, Opus Dei could not initiate any process as it was not competent to do so: the competent body was the Vicariate of Rome, which decided to initiate the process on 12 May 1981, i.e. after more than the statutory five years had passed. For its part, the Postulation of the cause, from before that date, was receiving testimonies from different parts of the world and collecting documentation (this is probably what Gore calls "paperwork"). The Postulation of the cause centralises and organises this work, as is done in all causes of this type. This does not

mean opening a cause, a decision which, as has been said above, was not made by Opus Dei but by the Church authority. This information is public and can be found on the website of the Dicastery of the Saints and on the Vatican website.

**-Page 156:** Gore says that "the process had then been pushed through at unprecedented speed: less than seventeen years elapsed between the death of Escrivá and his beatification, a third of the time it normally took." According to Gore, beatifications take on average about 50 years. The reality is that for several decades new canonical procedures have simplified much of the work involved in the process, and the average of 50 years has been reduced by almost half. This new set of procedures is the one that was followed in the case of Escrivá. Some other examples: Teresa of Calcutta was beatified by Pope John Paul II in

2003, just over six years after her death; the same for John Paul II (6 years after his death) or Carlo Acutis (beatified in 2020, 14 years after his death; he will be canonised in 2025). Pope Francis beatified Alvaro del Portillo 20 years after his death.

**-Page 156:** He mentions an interview with Vladimir Felzmann in *Newsweek* in which Felzmann stated that the founder "feared human sexuality, believed everything he wrote came from God, possessed a filthy temper and—most damning of all—defended Adolf Hitler." Escrivá's opinion of Hitler and Nazism was one of total condemnation, as has been said in the commentary on Chapter 3 above. On other matters, he said that "sex is not a shameful reality, but a divine gift that is ordered cleanly to life, to love, to fertility" (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 24) or that sexuality "is a noble human reality that can be sanctified" (*Christ*

Is Passing By, no. 5). As for the alleged "bad character" of St Josemaría, we refer to the commentary on page 112 of chapter 4 above.

**-Page 158:** He accuses Joaquín Navarro Valls (director of the Holy See Press Office for 25 years) that "he was not averse to putting out fabricated stories about the pope in order to maintain John Paul II's image as the virile, athletic picture of health—even when many in the Vatican knew he was ill." Navarro Valls' personal notes show the opposite: in the last hundred pages he repeatedly discusses his professional decision to communicate the Pope's illness to the world in a transparent way, even though not everyone shared that approach. In one of the first reflections on the subject, he says:

*"30 January 2003. A few days ago Giovanni Agnelli, president of Fiat, an institution in Italy, passed away. It was known that he was ill—prostate cancer—but at no time had a note or communiqué been issued, neither about his illness nor about the evolution or forecasts. As a result of my professional formation, I cannot help but think of the contrast with the information system we have followed here, every time the Pope has been ill. Despite the difficulties, we have always given all the appropriate information. I note this as a simple observation, without value judgements or comparisons." (Cf. Joaquín Navarro-Valls, "My Years with John Paul II. Notas Personal Notes," Editorial Planeta, Barcelona 2023, p. 518).*

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## ***Chapter 8. A New Demographic (pp. 159-178)***

**-Pages 159-178:** Throughout this chapter, the author dwells on accounts of people of some public prominence in Washington in an attempt to construct a kind of network connecting them to Opus Dei, and from there trying to demonstrate Opus Dei's supposed influence on the American public scene. For example, references to Deal Hudson (p. 159), Justice Scalia (p. 165), baseball commissioner Kuhn (p. 166), "supernumerary and banking heir Chauncey Stillman" (p. 160), Senator Santorum (p. 166), businessman Monaghan (p. 166), and so on. And he claims that together they were "forming a new alliance that would eventually transform a small, unknown group of conservative Catholics into the most influential force in American politics" (p. 166). The claim is so far-

fetched that there seems to be no other motivation, perhaps, than the American publisher's desire to find something shocking that might resonate with his market. The reality, however, is that it is a far-fetched political conspiracy theory. Among other things, it should be noted that none of these Catholics are members of Opus Dei, as they themselves explain to those who ask them. But it is enough for Gore that someone is a friend of such and such a person, or has participated in some Catholic services somewhere, to construct an institutional connection. The question is: Is there a Catholic in Washington who has not been to Mass, for example, at the Catholic Information Center chapel, or at Dahlgren Chapel in Georgetown University? Neither the former makes them Opus Dei nor the latter Jesuits, but, for Gore, such connections are easy to make.

**-Page 159:** He describes *The Way*, the work of St Josemaría's youth, as "the main philosophical text" of Opus Dei. However, *The Way* is not a "philosophical text." As Saint Josemaría himself says in his prologue, it is advice and spiritual considerations "that I say to you in your ear, in the confidence of a friend, a brother, a father." *The Way* is a book for prayer, for starting a dialogue with God in personal prayer. Then he again reproduces a quotation from von Balthasar, without referring to the clarification of the meaning of this phrase that von Balthasar himself would later make and where he concluded by saying "Many of the accusations (also those that the article in your newspaper alleges against the teaching of religion by members of Opus Dei) are simply false and anti-clerical" (See the more extensive explanation in the commentary on page 124).

**-Page 160:** He alludes to two schools promoted by members of the Work in Washington; he writes that "both schools had difficulty gaining followers among the city's Catholic community." The schools do not seek followers but students or pupils, whatever their religion, but the use of this language reinforces the book's intention to portray Opus Dei as a closed group.

**-Pages 160-161:** He ridicules two priests (Fr Malcom Kennedy and Fr Ron Gillis) with phrases taken out of context; if the reader takes the trouble to go to the sources, he will see that in the first case it is an indirect quotation, an interpretation; and in the second a simple joke (cut off before it becomes obvious that it is a joke).

**-Page 161:** Gore states that Opus Dei had three numerary residences in Washington D.C. In the early 1990s,

Opus Dei had five numerary residences in Washington DC: Clevmont, Stonecrest, Tenley, Van Ness, and Wyoming. A sixth residence (Linnean) was opened in 1995.

**-Page 161:** Mentions a residence in Kalorama (Washington) "inhabited mainly by priests and members of the national government of Opus Dei." This is false: the members of the government of the Work in the United States live in New York.

**-Page 161:** He speaks (without quite understanding what he is saying) of the personal and collective means of formation given in Opus Dei centres: "This guidance often veered beyond the purely spiritual, with the 'chats' touching on personal, professional and even political matters. The numeraries were instructed to use these sessions to extract more money from the supernumerary base." The

statement refers to the "*Experiences of Apostolic Work*, 2003, p. 115, which says nothing of the sort, but invites the supernumeraries and co-operators to "assume a large part of the burden in the works of the apostolate, and to work with initiative in the extension and financial support of these works." Obviously, there is also no mention of talking about politics in the means of formation: this is totally false and it is not clear what it refers to. Nothing of the sort appears in that document (which has now been superseded) which he cites as the source.

**-Page 162:** Without references to any sources, Gore sums up what he wanted to state with that tangle of hard-to-verify quotes: "In many ways, spiritual guidance was a front for building a network of like-minded Catholic political activists—the guerrilla army that Escrivá had

long envisioned." It is unfortunate, but true to form, that Gore would confuse his own flights of fancy with what Escrivá himself imagined.

**-Page 163:** Gore claims that Bob Best joined Opus Dei during high school. Bob was born on August 23, 1937. He joined Opus Dei on March 8, 1958 during his studies at Villanova University.

**-Page 163:** He writes: "On another occasion, Best gifted the founder with a pen that President Nixon had used to sign a piece of legislation. Escrivá smiled and handed it to some Spanish bankers, who used it to sign a check to pay for a new Opus Dei project." This is false: the moment when the gift was made is filmed, and Escrivá did not give it "to bankers" but to the group of supernumeraries with whom he was meeting at the time.

**-Page 163:** Quoting an interview with Damian von Stauffenberg, he says that "Escrivá had envisioned the Work as a hidden army of Christian soldiers." This expression does not appear in any of the writings or phrases of the founder of Opus Dei.

**-Page 164:** Based on the same source, he claims that "much of the money [from a Best foundation] went to Opus Dei projects." Again, this is a false conjecture for which he offers no source or proof.

**-Page 164:** Gore states that the Work was willing to assign a priest and collaborate with the diocese through the chaplaincy of the Catholic Information Center "contradicting the original spirit laid down by the founder." The author sets himself up as an interpreter of the purity of a charism, although he does not explain why this fact contradicts the "original spirit." Already during the

founder's lifetime, priests of the Work were involved in numerous parishes or other tasks of the diocesan churches. On the other hand, all the institutions of the Church are called upon to collaborate, as far as they are able, with the requests of the diocesan bishops, as in the case referred to by Gore.

**-Page 166:** Gore says that the National Center Foundation purchased the property at 34th Street and Lexington Avenue in New York in 1993. He also says that most of the money for the purchase had actually been transferred from another nonprofit called the Association for Cultural Interchange Inc. The MHP property at 34th Street and Lexington Avenue was purchased in 1993 by the National Center Foundation, Inc., which was later renamed Murray Hill Place, Inc. The Association for Cultural Interchange

provided a loan to facilitate the purchase. The loan was repaid a few years later.

**-Page 167:** Gore claims that Murray Hill Place cost \$70 million to build. However, the cost was a little less, and it included not only the "cost to build" but also the cost of the land, the cost of all architectural, engineering, interior design and other consulting fees and the cost of all furnishings and equipment.

**-Page 168:** Gore says that two fundraising campaigns of Woodlawn Foundation, Inc. – the Second Generation Campaign and the Twenty-First Century Campaign – raised more than \$70 million. The total raised from these two campaigns was over \$65 million. These campaigns were conducted in a professional manner and Woodlawn Foundation gave donors a clear and transparent picture of how

it was using their money. Woodlawn regularly publishes its complete audited financial statements.

**-Page 168:** Gore writes that the body of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo was put on display in a chapel in Villa Tevere, and that "At one point, the pope visited Villa Tevere to pay his own respects. It was an extraordinary gesture—the pope never attended funeral Masses, even when a cardinal died in Rome—and illustrative of the deep friendship between the two men." The fact is that John Paul II did not attend Alvaro del Portillo's funeral, but was at the wake (also called the *funeral chapel*). In the notes he refers to an interview in a blog, in which Navarro Valls says: "The same day that del Portillo died, he wanted to attend the funeral chapel. I have to say that in all the years of his pontificate I have only seen the Pope make one similar exception; because not even when a

cardinal died in Rome did the Pope go to the house. He would hold a funeral a few days later for him, and that one exception apart from Alvaro de Portillo was when the doctor who operated on him on the day of the attack died: Dr Francesco Crucitti. We said to him, Holy Father, it will set a precedent to go and see a person in his house. The Pope's response was 'this man saved my life, I'm going to his house.' Those were the only two exceptions I can remember in the whole pontificate."

**-Page 168:** It states that "Del Portillo passed away in March 1994 following a major heart attack hours after returning from a trip to the Holy Land, where he had set another hugely expensive project in motion." Bishop del Portillo's trip was a pilgrimage to the land of Jesus, coinciding with his 80th birthday. There is a chronological error in the account: the project to which Gore

refers is the Saxum activity centre, the first stone of which will be blessed by his successor, Bishop Javier Echevarría, in January 2014, i.e. 20 years later. The last stone was laid in 2018.

**-Page 168:** He goes on to state that "This longstanding dream of Escriva's would eventually become the Saxum Visitor Center, a \$60 million development on the outskirts of Jerusalem." Gore's figure is confused: as Antonio Quintana, Secretary General of the Saxum Foundation, explained here, "the cost of construction was about 31 million euros. It is important to bear in mind that it was financed by more than 100,000 private donations from people in 50 countries. The rest of the donations were earmarked—as explained here—for an Endowment Fund to ensure the sustainability of the project in the future; to provide grants and subsidies for the activities

organised and to develop training programmes.

**-Page 168:** Among other falsehoods, he states in a generic way that, during his time as Prelate, Del Portillo "outright lied about the authority that Opus Del held over them [Opus Dei members]." There is no note to support such a description. And, in any case, the prelate's jurisdiction over the members was not defined by Del Portillo, but by Opus Dei's 1982 Statutes, approved and given by the Holy See to the institution. Among other articles specifying this jurisdiction, number 27 refers to the formal declaration to be made by the Prelature and the person concerned for temporary or definitive incorporation. In this declaration, the candidate obliges himself (from the moment of his incorporation and for as long as this incorporation lasts) "1º to remain under the jurisdiction of

the Prelate and of the other competent authorities of the Prelature, to dedicate himself faithfully to all that pertains to the specific mission of the Prelature. 2º to fulfill all the duties that come with the condition of Numerary, Associate or Supernumerary of Opus Dei and to observe the norms that govern the Prelature, as well as the legitimate dispositions of the Prelate and of the other competent authorities of the Prelature with regard to its regime, spirit and apostolate."

**-Page 169:** Gore states that "In his first message to the membership he [Bishop Echevarría] set three objectives: the family, the recruitment of the young, and an 'evangelisation' of the cultural sphere." This is false, and Gore bases his falsehood on a source that does not say this. There is no mention of "youth recruitment" in that message,

and the reader can check it directly [here](#) or [here](#).

**-Pages 169-170:** Gore describes how the money from the sale of Ben Venue company was used by members of the Smith family. Specifically, that Sandy and Mark Smith received \$80 million from the sale; that Sandy used his portion of the money to set up the Sauganash Foundation, and that Mark used his portion to set up the Rockside Foundation. Gore says that both were secretaries of their respective foundations, but that Woodlawn and Opus Dei controlled the posts of President and CFO, and that both foundations had a clause inserted in their founding documents blocking the brothers from taking back control and stipulating that they could nominate new people to the board but that the Woodlawn Foundation would have the same

right and thus always outnumber them.

Sandy and Mark Smith set up Sauganash Foundation and Rockside Foundation as "Type I supporting organizations" of Woodlawn Foundation. A supporting organization in the United States is a public charity that operates under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code in 26 USCA 509. A supporting organization either makes grants to, or performs the operations of, a public charity similar to a private foundation.

According to the website of the Internal Revenue Service of the U.S., "a Type I supporting organization must be operated, supervised or controlled by its supported organization(s), typically by giving the supported organization(s) the power to regularly appoint or elect a majority of the directors or trustees of the supporting organization." There was nothing illegal, unethical,

or strange about the setup of these two foundations.

**-Pages 170-171:** Gore claims that the Austral University and University Hospital project in Buenos Aires (Argentina) was a failure and that there were irregularities in the handling of funds, including diversions and false invoicing by people linked to Opus Dei. The author's accusations are false. From the outset, the Perez Companc Foundation made an exclusive commitment to move forward with the University and Austral University Hospital project, which was not only completed as planned, but continues to be a benchmark of educational and care excellence in the country.

It is false to claim that the Austral University or people linked to Opus Dei handled money for the project. The entire management, from the purchase of the land to the

construction of the buildings, was carried out entirely by the Perez Companc Foundation. Only when the development was completed did the Foundation formalise a deed of transfer of ownership to ACES, the entity that owns the Universidad Austral, which was executed on 17 August 1999. On the other hand, Austral University Hospital started its activities on May 1st, 2000.

The Foundation's commitment to the project has been ongoing from the outset and continues to this day. Concrete examples include support for teacher education and training, investment in technological upgrades, and active support for Austral Hospital's accreditation by the Joint Commission International (JCI), a process promoted and funded by the Foundation.

The author describes the Universidad Austral project as a "failure."

However, the data refute this. Since its inauguration, the University has grown in infrastructure, number of students and academic prestige. To give a few examples:

- Current rankings: Universidad Austral was ranked No. 1 among private universities in Argentina by the *Times Higher Education (THE) Latin America University Rankings*. In addition, among the 25 Argentine universities participating in the *QS World University Rankings*, Universidad Austral is positioned as the privately managed university with the best reputation among employers, and the second in the country among public and private universities. This positioning is in line with Austral's current position as number one among Argentina's private universities in terms of Employability in the 2022 *QS Graduate Employability Rankings*.

- Austral University Hospital has been accredited by the *Joint Commission International* (JCI) on four occasions: 2016, 2019, 2022, being one of the first hospitals in the world to obtain the highest certification in the JCI "academic hospital" category.

Other figures that support the solidity of this project over the years: undergraduate and postgraduate courses (in total, 91), undergraduate courses (25), postgraduate courses (67), diploma courses and extension programmes (427), number of professors (1,306), number of professors with doctoral degrees (325), number of researchers (400), CONICET scholarship holders (36), number of undergraduate and postgraduate students (10,000, not counting students on programmes), percentage of scholarships, financial aid or university loans (39.10% of the total number of students), number of

scholarships, financial aid or university loans (39.10% of the total number of students), number of scholarships, financial aid or university loans (39.10% of the total number of students), not counting programme students), percentage of scholarships, financial aid or university loans (39.10% of the total student body). Some figures from Austral University Hospital (2023) are: 992,150 medical consultations, 20,596 surgeries, 184 transplants, 12,517 discharges.

This type of unsupported accusation highlights the lack of rigour and credibility of the narrative, which is discredited when contrasted with reality itself. To describe as a "failure" a project that has shown sustained growth—even during periods of major economic crisis in the country—both in terms of infrastructure and prestige, is unfounded. The author's assertions

appear to be an attempt to distort the facts to fit his preconceived narrative.

**-Page 172** (also p. 42): Gore claims that the McCloskey family lived in Falls Church, Virginia. In reality, they lived in Bethesda, Maryland.

**-Page 176:** Gore claims that the *Culture of Life Foundation* was created and directed by Bob Best. The *Culture of Life Foundation* had no relationship with Opus Dei. We do not know who set it up.

**-Page 177:** It states that "Evidently, the founder's 'instructions' to Opus Dei members that they encourage potential recruits to keep their vocation secret from their families were still alive and well." This is a false statement and does not appear in any of the founder's "instructions."

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## ***Chapter 9. Cloak and dagger (pp. 179-194) including photo booklet***

**-Pages 179-184:** Gore discusses the Robert Hanssen spy scandal. According to Gore, when Bonnie Hanssen discovered Robert communicating with the Russians in 1980, she convinced him to talk with Fr. Bob Bucciarelli, who first advised Hanssen to turn himself in but then changed his mind and said he should give away the money he had been paid and move on with his life. Gore also suggests that Robert or Bonnie Hanssen may have donated the money received from the Russians to Opus Dei via Opus Dei's alleged network of shell corporations.

Gore's account distorts the facts in important ways. He says that after Bonnie became suspicious and

confronted him, "Hanssen told her everything." However, according to authoritative media accounts, and three major books on the case, Robert Hanssen lied to Bonnie, telling her he had not passed anything significant to the Soviets (in reality, Hanssen had already passed along very damaging secrets to the Soviets). For example, David Wise, wrote in "Spy: The Inside Story of How the FBI's Robert Hanssen Betrayed America" (2002) that "Hanssen admitted to his wife that he was selling secrets to the Soviets. He insisted, falsely, that he had not given them anything of significance; he was running a scam." (See Wise, p. 22.) Also, the New York Times article by Wise says: "Mr. Hanssen asserted to his wife that he had not given the Soviets any significant information and described his actions as an effort to trick the Soviets in exchange for money, according to the account Mrs. Hanssen has given." See also the

article in The New York Times, "Wife Says Suspect Told a Priest 20 Years Ago of Aiding Soviets." The fact that Hanssen had lied to Bonnie and falsely told her he had not given anything significant to the Soviets is also reported in other serious books on the subject, including "The Spy Next Door" by Elaine Shannon and Ann Blackman (2002) p.82, and "The Bureau and the Mole" by David A. Vise (2002) p. 47.

**-Pages 180-181:** Gore also reports that FBI director Louie Freeh "was widely rumored to be a member" of Opus Dei, but the book about Opus Dei by John Allen (2005, p. 145) makes clear that Freeh was not a member. Other sources also make clear the same thing (for example, see [here](#)). Therefore, to say that it was "widely rumored" that Freeh was a member without clarifying that he was not is tantamount to hiding important information from the

reader. Gore also states that Father Bob Bucciarelli was "the most prominent Opus Dei figure in the United States." The conversation with Father Bob reportedly happened around 1980; Father Bob was not the Vicar of Opus Dei in the U.S. at that time (he was from 1966 to 1976); that is, using the author's words, he was not the most prominent figure of the organization in the country.

**-Page 181-182:** Hanssen's contributions to the Work were not of great monetary value – contrary to the insinuations Gore makes, trying to cast doubt on the data available to him. Gore reports that Father Thomas Bohlin "told [the] U.S. official that Opus Dei had conducted an audit of 'all financial contributions' made by Hanssen and had concluded that he had only contributed \$4,000 during the previous thirty years as a member—and not a single penny after 1992."

Gore insinuates that Hanssen may have channeled contributions through his wife Bonnie. That claim is contradicted by the fact that the FBI regarded Bonnie as cooperative, she was never charged, and she was even allowed to receive her spousal pension from the FBI. There has never been anything to substantiate a claim of donations to Opus Dei through shell corporations; presumably, the FBI would have discovered anything like this. In this whole story, both the family and Opus Dei were victims of a deception.

**-Page 182:** We read that "it was unthinkable that an Opus Dei member close to the top of the F.B.I. pay scale would have chosen to forgo their widely monthly donations to the prelature—given that such payments were widely viewed as one of the supernumerary's essential duties." The amount of the monthly

contribution (it is a donation, not a "payment") that supernumeraries make to the apostolic needs of Opus Dei depends not only on their personal possibilities, but also on their personal circumstances; each one evaluates and decides in conscience. Whatever the amount of the contribution, he will not be expelled from Opus Dei. It is not inconceivable that someone like Robert Hanssen, who led a double life, would have stopped contributing. In addition, the endnote given by Gore to support what he has just said refers to an FBI report on this case which does not speak at all of Hanssen's alleged contributions to Opus Dei.

**-Page 182:** He writes that "Bohlin's calculations also likely ignored the thousands of dollars Hanssen spent on tuition for his children at the Opus Dei schools." Those school fees are paid by all parents, whether they

are Opus Dei or not, Catholic or not, believers or not. It is payment for a service, not a charitable contribution; and it is money that goes to the school, not to Opus Dei.

**-Pages 182-183:** Gore says that "By 2001, as Opus Dei approached the ten-year anniversary of the founder's beatification, the membership figures were finally starting to show some improvement, thanks to the prelature's embrace of the pope's conservative agenda." The *Annuario Pontificio* and the book *Opus Dei: A History* (Volume II, pages 199 and 296) show that overall Opus Dei membership growth was lower in the years of prelate *Javier Echevarría* (1994-2016) than in those of *Álvaro del Portillo* (1994-2016). It is true that, as the *Annuario Pontificio* (cited in the notes) points out, in the years 1987-1990 the growth seems to have been very modest and then there was a strong recovery, but this did

not take place in 2001, but already in the early 1990s (1990: 74,710 members; 1995: 78,517; 2001: 82,715). Moreover, to link the supposed take-off of Opus Dei in 2001 with the agenda of Pope John Paul II, who had been at the head of the Church for more than twenty years already by then, makes little sense.

**-Page 187:** Referring to a television interview with Bob Best, Gore states that: "His argument echoed the internal Opus Dei documents used to guide numeraries like him about how to 'ensure that scientific truth and progress serve as a means to imbue men and culture with the knowledge of God'." However, this characterization does not match what Bob Best said in the television interview. Rather, he spoke of scientific knowledge and faith in divine revelation being compatible, according to an idea that does not originate from within Opus Dei but

from figures like Newman, Humboldt, etc. (The exact phrase is: "I don't believe there's any conflict at all between good science and the truths of the faith. Truth is indivisible, and so to make the point that science always wins over faith is absurd—in my opinion.").

**-Photo booklet:** "By 1969, ties between the Franco regime and Opus Dei were so close that more than half of the seats in the cabinet belonged to men who were members of the organization"; as mentioned above, the reality is that three ministers in that government were members of Opus Dei—Laureano López Rodó, Vicente Mortes and Gregorio López Bravo—out of a total of nineteen.

**-Photo booklet:** "Escrivá toyed with the idea of moving Opus Dei into the Greek Orthodox Church": Vladimir Felzmann's allegation about St Josemaría's 1966 trip to Greece is

completely unfounded. See commentary on p. 111 in Chapter 5.

**Photo booklet:** On the construction of the Torreciudad shrine, he states that "it remains unclear where the money to build it came from": Opus Dei has made it perfectly clear that Torreciudad was built thanks to a large-scale financial campaign in which many people were involved. This documentary on the history of Torreciudad, especially from minute 15:30 onwards, includes some of the testimonies of the contributors.

**-Photo booklet:** "His family later said that Calvi had been negotiating with Opus Dei." As noted elsewhere in this document, as soon as Calvi's widow said this, the Vicar of Opus Dei in Italy, Mario Lantini, sent her a letter asking her to give details. He received no reply. Apart from the widow's statement, there has never been any indication of any contact

between Calvi and anyone in Opus Dei.

**-Page 188:** "In January 2002, more than a thousand dignitaries gathered at the Palazzo dell'Apollinare, in central Rome": The congress mentioned here and in the following pages was held at the Complesso di Santo Spirito in Sassia, and the afternoon sessions, in groups, were held at the Apollinare. Moreover, the word "dignitaries" is inaccurate: it was not a congress for public authorities (there were very few ecclesiastical authorities, even fewer civil ones), but for intellectuals, promoters of social initiatives, professionals in different fields. The proceedings of the congress were published and attest to the type of people who took part in it: here is an extensive description.

**-Page 188:** "The money spent on the university bought the prelature

power and influence around the world": This is merely the author's opinion. Of course, the reference he gives in the footnote for that statement says very different things.

**-Pages 188-189:** About Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta it says that "he would eventually become secretary of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts—also known as the Vatican's Supreme Court—a body already presided over by Julián Herranz." The Vatican's tribunals are the Roman Rota and the Apostolic Signatura, bodies quite distinct from the Dicastery for Legislative Texts. Incidentally, Arrieta and Herranz did not coincide in that dicastery: when Arrieta was appointed secretary in February 2007, Herranz had just stepped down as president.

**-Pages 189-190:** He speaks of conferences in Rome: "Speaker after speaker reiterated the need of Opus

Dei members—and Catholics more generally—to use their positions in society to shape public policy, citing one famous phrase attributed to the founder. 'Have you ever bothered to think how absurd it is to leave one's Catholicism aside on entering a university, or a professional association, or a scholarly meeting, or a congress—as if you were checking your hat at the door?' he had supposedly asked." The notes refer to a *National Catholic Reporter* article by John Allen about these conferences: "Speakers cited a famous saying of Escriva." The quote is in point 353 of "The Way," a book available in 142 languages, many of them on-line at [www.escriva.org](http://www.escriva.org). Specifically it says: "Have you ever stopped to think how absurd it is to leave one's Catholicism aside on entering a university, a professional association, a cultural society, or Parliament, like a man leaving his hat at the door?" The point does not

propose to assail anything, even if one can respect the interpretations that each person can make of his or her reading of it. It calls for unity of life for Christians, who should imitate Christ not only when they are in church but also when they work ethically, when they serve their neighbour, and so on.

**-Page 191:** "McCloskey's comments mirrored the Holy See's own response to the scandal, which was being handled by the pope's press secretary, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, the most prominent member of Opus Dei within the Vatican. He had been the one who persuaded Cardinal Bernard Law, the Archbishop of Boston and a man directly implicated in the cover-up of sexual abuse, to resist calls for him to resign": New unfounded accusation. In his personal notes on the abuse crisis in the United States (*My years with John Paul II. Personal notes*, pp. 508-511),

Navarro Valls says that he was not allowed to make any unilateral decisions, even in the area of his work, communication with the press.

**-Page 192:** Gore says that Deal Hudson fell out with Fr. C John McCloskey after Hudson discovered proof that the Opus Dei priest had broken the seal of confession by sharing personal information with someone else. Gore alleges that this was a widespread technique. The first news Opus Dei has of any such allegation against Fr. McCloskey (1953-2023) is through the book by Gareth Gore.

In fact, Hudson never had a falling out with Fr. McCloskey. Hudson published a letter rebutting these accusations, making clear that he had been friends with Fr. McCloskey "for years" and noting that their "friendship will continue." It is absolutely false that priests of Opus

Dei have broken the seal of confession. We take any such allegation very seriously in order to protect the sacramental seal of confession, which is a most grave obligation for every priest.

**-Page 192:** "Hudson had unintentionally hit on a widespread technique used by some in Opus Dei who sometimes shared information gathered in the confessional with local directors to guide them in controlling members and sympathizers in their charge": Again a false accusation and in a serious matter: the priest who commits the crime of violation of sacramental secrecy incurs excommunication *latae sententiae* (c. 1386, 1). Furthermore, according to the letter published by Hudson, denying claims of a "falling out" with Father McCloskey, Hudson's differences with McCloskey were not about

confession, but about the role of Catholics in American society.

**-Page 192:** "The regular 'chat,' also known as the 'confidence,' that all Opus Dei members were expected to have with their spiritual director": Here and in the following paragraphs this conversation of spiritual accompaniment is presented as a strict obligation. The quotation from Javier Echevarría on the following page speaks of how beneficial it is, but does not impose it. It rather advises it, as Pope Francis, for example, says: "Making oneself known, manifesting oneself to a person who accompanies us on the journey of life. ... Recounting what we have lived or are searching for, in front of another person, helps to bring clarity to ourselves, bringing to light the many thoughts that dwell within us, and which often unsettle us with their insistent refrains," etc.

(Cfr. Francis, Paul VI Hall, general audience of 4-1-2023).

**-Page 193:** Continuing the theme of fraternal talk, Gore attributes to Echevarría the statement that "such manifestations of conscience were not to be a free choice but, rather, a mandatory element of membership." This attribution is invented and naturally does not refer to any source. For Opus Dei members, the only compulsory thing is the same as for all Catholics: to confess mortal sins once a year (to the priest of their choice, whether Opus Dei or not): it is something the Church, not Opus Dei, obliges them to do.

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## **Chapter 10. The Albino Assassin (pp. 195-217)**

**-Page 195-196:** He says that, with the publication of Dan Brown's novel, Brian Finnerty's [head of Opus Dei's communications in the United States] "heart sank." He adds: "With the publishing frenzy about the Hanssen scandal finally dying down, he had been hoping to dedicate the coming year to promoting the cause for beatification of Del Portillo, a clear priority for his bosses at Villa Tevere." Here, as elsewhere in the book, acting like the omniscient narrator of a novel, Gore presents his imaginings of "his character's" thoughts in a way that does not match the experiences of the real subject. As the real Finnerty says, "Gore's account of my thoughts when I first read *The Da Vinci Code* is also largely fictional." On the other hand, the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo would take place eleven

years later, in 2014, and until then—as Finnerty explains—"I had no role in furthering that cause" (Clarification by Brian Finnerty, 23-11-2024).

**-Page 198:** Gore alleges that numeraries are called to the priesthood whether they want to be or not. This is false: only those who want it are called to the priesthood.

**-Page 199:** "Millions of dollars were spent on two supposedly serious academic institutes—one at the Opus Dei university in Rome and the other in Spain—that did little serious scholarship, but pumped out paper after paper extolling the virtues of Saint Josemaría." A gratuitous and surprising assertion, which the reader can verify for himself by going to the research portal of the University of Navarre, or the report on the priority lines of research of the Pontificia Università della Santa

Croce in the current four-year period.

**-Page 199:** Gore states that "Opus Dei's internal magazine *Romana* was filled with accounts sent in by ordinary members, who told of the many souls being drawn to the Work." *Romana* is not the internal magazine of the Prelature, but its official bulletin, which is freely accessible through the web: <https://romana.org/en/>

**-Page 200:** He talks about the *Da Vinci Code*: "The reviews were glowing, with the *New York Times* describing the book with a single word—"Wow." In the absence of elements to assess the possible irony of the one word with which *The New York Times* described the book, what can be affirmed with the help of newspaper archives is that, contrary to Gore's opinion, critical acclaim for *The Da Vinci Code* was far from

unanimous. For example, in the review published in *El País* on January 17, 2004, Francisco Casavella states that the novel is "the biggest piece of trash this reader has had in his hands since the pulp novels of the seventies."

The review explains: "The problem with *The Da Vinci Code* is not that it tends towards zero-degree writing. Nor that it is boring, verbose where it shouldn't be, clumsy in descriptions and the introduction of data. ... Nor does it matter that the sentences are silly. ... Nor that the author lacks the slightest 'narrative astuteness.' ... Nor does it matter that the dialogues lack all naturalness, but rather that they commit the aberrant indecency of not even feigning communication between people, that there is dialogue with the sole aim of letting the reader know how educated the author is. It is also possible to overlook the fact that the author is

not, after all, educated. One can forgive anything, but what cannot be forgiven is that this novel is promoted, and not only through conventional advertising channels, as a product of some value. In other words, Dan Brown and his code are to the popular novel what Ed Wood is to cinema. It is entirely legitimate, if not always ideal, for a publisher to be concerned with the commerciality of its products, and we all rejoice at a success, but you cannot insult a tradition of great artists and competent craftsmen with something so paltry. And I cannot but congratulate the publishers all over the world who once refused to publish this infamy and now have no regrets. It is a demonstration of a remnant of dignity, not only in the publishing world, but in the mercantile system."

**-Page 202** (also p. 34): Gore talks about the complaints against Fr. C

John McCloskey, and Opus Dei's response to it. Please see Opus Dei's statements regarding Fr. C. John McCloskey [here](#).

**-Page 205-206:** It states that, legally speaking, apart from the headquarters and two other properties in Rome, Opus Dei had no legal or financial links with the residences, youth centres, schools and universities "that had been set up in its name around the world—other than the occasional 'voluntary' donations that these operations made to the central government each year." Legally speaking, there are other legal and economic links, for example, with regional government headquarters in some countries. But for the vast majority of initiatives, we refer to the third and fourth explanations on p. 20 of the Introduction above. To organise oneself in this way is a legitimate and perfectly legal choice, which

responds to a desire congruent with a secular spirituality, publicly expressed in the Statutes of Opus Dei.

**-Page 207:** He argues that in 2004, after a steady rise in the price of Banco Popular shares, Opus Dei's stake would be worth more than one billion euros. And in the note he states that "many of these companies and foundations shared the same shareholders; they were run by the same tight knit group of numeraries; and they all seemed to donate huge sums to Opus Dei projects ... Of course, the prelature's name never appeared on any documentation—that would raise too many questions. Escrivá had told Luis Valls-Taberner to always avoid any connections to Opus Dei, even when specifically carrying out deeds in its name."

This is false: Gore again falsely attributes the activities of some members to Opus Dei. There were

different shareholders and various families, which is the reason why the Prelature did not figure in any sense whatsoever. Francisco Aparicio adds that "The alleged communication of St Josemaría with Luis on this matter is false and the author does not provide any source" (Clarification by Francisco Aparicio, 12-XI-2024).

**-Pages 209-214:** Once again, there is a repetition of the exercises of continuous connections between Opus Dei and Banco Popular. We refer to the previous explanations offered in this document, starting with the first part of the *Introduction* above.

**-Page 211:** Gore states that during Luis Valls' final illness, at home or in hospital, Luis' brother Javier "began to sense that he was being prevented from seeing his brother. Whenever he called to arrange a visit, he was told that Luis was asleep, or too sick

to receive visitors, or that a doctor had advised him to rest. ... Why were they preventing the two men from seeing each other?" This statement is false, see "Clarification from Francisco Aparicio on 12 November 2024" on this point in the commentary on p. 5 of the *Introduction* above.

**Page 211:** He states again that "Javier [Valls Taberner] began to suspect that information was being fed to Luis to turn him against him, a man he had known all his life, a trusted confidant whom he had brought in as his right-hand man during one of the most difficult periods at the bank—and a man he had trusted with Banco Popular's most intimate secrets. Why were they preventing the two men from seeing each other? Javier suspected that the other numeraries were acting on instructions from Rome to safeguard the assets still in his brother's name

and prevent him from rewriting his will during his final weeks." What is said here about the last months of Luis Valls Taberner's life is pure invention: Luis received visitors and there was no obstacle for his brother to visit him, as he did whenever he wanted. On the other hand, "Rome" obviously did not give any instructions, because "Rome" (we assume this means the directors of Opus Dei in Rome) were not involved in the bank in any way. Francisco Aparicio explained the following about the succession to the presidency of the Bank:

*"The succession at the Bank, Luis being ill and elderly, was unanimously endorsed by the Board of Directors. Ángel Ron, who worked with Valls for more than 20 years, was the person chosen. A competent and recognised person in the sector and, for those who wanted to look for other relationships, not linked to Opus Dei.*

*He headed the institution almost until 2017, when the Bank was taken over by Banco Santander. Some people wondered why his brother Javier, vice-president for so many years (and joint president for the last few years), was not his successor. There may have been several reasons, but what seems clear is that if Luis Valls had thought it appropriate, he would have proposed him, but he did not."*

(Clarification by Francisco Aparicio on 12-11-2024).

**-Page 212:** Gore maintains that "a takeover [of Banco Popular] would cut off the 'charitable contributions' which, though scaled back by Ron, still amounted to tens of millions of dollars every year. Other arrangements between the bank and Opus Dei risked being exposed, too ... It also allowed the Banco de Depósitos—a bank within the bank that was owned by another Opus Dei-

linked foundation—to use its vast branch network across the country. Many members received loans from this bank that they would have been very unlikely to get from any other bank." Again, there are many falsehoods and fabrications. For example, explains Francisco Aparicio, "there has never been any agreement between the Work and the Banco Popular; on the other hand, the Banco de Depósitos has always had and continues to have only one branch in Madrid; and the loans it granted were granted by a bank, without this generating any particular link or obligation other than the obligation of returning the loan" (Clarification by Francisco Aparicio on 12-11-2024).

**-Page 214:** "Javier conceded defeat. He felt bittered and betrayed—he was ousted from the bank where he had worked for more than forty years, including seventeen as chairman

alongside his older brother. When his bodyguards and driver were suddenly removed, he started to think he might lose more than his job. The image of Roberto Calvi, the banker found hanging under Blackfriars Bridge, began to haunt him. He flew to London to speak with the Spanish ambassador there, a man known to be high up in Opus Dei, and asked him to inform Villa Tevere that he had incriminating documents in a safe in Switzerland, which would be released if anything were to happen to him or his family. He resolved to sell his shares in the bank and live in the Alps, a long way from the Opus Dei cabal that had ousted him."

This novelistic description is not credited with any source in the Notes. He again relies on the legend about Calvi—see the previous points in this document—and speaks of "the Spanish ambassador, a man known

to hold a high position in Opus Dei." Gore does not give the name of the ambassador, or the date, nor who knows him as a high official in Opus Dei, nor who told him the story.

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## ***Chapter 11. A Marriage of Convenience (pp. 218-236)***

**-Pp. 218-236:** Almost the entire chapter is about the activity of Luis Tellez, who has set up a number of academic institutes. Gore builds up conspiracy theories weaving together the names of Leonard Leo and other American cultural figures, linking them to Opus Dei, as if people were not free and capable of acting according to their own ideas. The reality is that the network of academic institutes that Luis Tellez

has founded and/or promoted and/or financed are laudable initiatives of his and many others. There are many people on the boards of these institutes, of varied backgrounds and religions, and also in the Foundation for Excellence in Higher Education (FEHE). None of the institutes, nor FEHE, has a formal relationship or agreement with Opus Dei, which would in any case be quite legitimate. Moreover, although this does not change his status as a free citizen, Leonard Leo is not a member of Opus Dei, as he himself has explained.

**-Page 221:** Gore discusses the Clover Foundation and its relationship with Opus Dei. See Clover's website for an explanation of its relationship with Opus Dei.

**-Pages 220-221:** About Luis Tellez, promoter and current president of the Witherspoon Institute, Gore

states: "The conference ['Why Marriage is in the Public Interest'] was the first major project of the Witherspoon Institute, the brainchild of a numerary from Mexico who had been tasked with creating a beachhead for Opus Dei at American universities across the United States." Gore cites an interview with Téllez as a source. However, Luis Téllez himself explains that Gore twisted his words: "No one had given me this task, and besides, the objective of the Institute is not to create a beachhead for Opus Dei. The Institute and everything that came afterwards was my initiative and that of the men and women who joined the project, and its objectives are academic and cultural; obviously, many people in the Work have encouraged me and praised me for this cultural initiative, and others have collaborated in various ways, but it is important to be serious when explaining things, and to do so properly" (Clarification

by Luis Téllez, 27-11-2024). Regarding Gore's statement on p. 224 ("[the Institute] was supported by hundreds of thousands of dollars from Opus Dei"), Téllez states that "it is false: the Witherspoon Institute did not receive such a donation" (Clarification by Luis Téllez, 27-11-2024).

**Pages 221:** He refers to Del Portillo's "two-month tour of the United States in 1988." And Gore adds that "Del Portillo and many of those close to the prelate were obsessed with exporting what they called 'the Spanish model'—building an Opus Dei university and a network of feeder schools—to the United States. The system had been exported to other countries, including Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines, and that had helped generate thousands of new numeraries for the movement." This is false: Bishop Del Portillo never

used the expression "the Spanish model" or anything similar in the United States. On the other hand, to say "thousands of new numeraries" reflects a remarkable ignorance of reality.

**-Page 223:** Gore writes that the Clover Foundation provides grants to the James Madison Program at Princeton University. [Click here](#) to see a page from Clover Foundation's Form-990 filing with the IRS for the year 2000, which shows a grant to Robert George to start the James Madison Program at Princeton.

**-Page 224-225:** Gore discusses the creation of the Higher Education Initiatives Foundation in the 1990s, and says that it provided grants of \$500,000 to the Witherspoon Institute and \$187,000 to the James Madison Program. The Higher Education Initiatives Foundation was the personal initiative of some members

of Opus Dei. It has no formal relationship with Opus Dei. As far as we know, it did provide startup funding to the Witherspoon Institute and the James Madison Program.

**-Page 227:** Gore writes that "as soon as Ratzinger won the election, the Opus Dei kingmaker Herranz wrote to him ... to discuss what the priorities of his papacy ought to be." The note refers to a book: "Julián Herranz, *Dos papas: Mis recuerdos con Benedicto XVI y Francisco*, Rialp, Madrid, 2023, p. 55." On p. 55 of that book, it speaks of Benedict XVI's visit to the United Kingdom and not of any letter from Herranz to the Pope. Between pages 63 and 64, the cardinal does include a letter he wrote to Benedict XVI on 7 October 2005 (his election took place on 19 April of that year) which accompanies a note entitled "Some suggestions for reform" which had been discussed earlier. In the letter

he says, for example: "I apologise for this audacity of mine, which is due, rather than to a claim of particular competence in this matter (which I do not have), to a simple openness of heart, following your kind suggestion." Turning that note into "what the priorities of his papacy ought to be" is a bold imagination on Gore's part. Although one senses what he is trying to imply, it is as inaccurate as calling Herranz "Opus Dei kingmaker."

**-Page 228:** He states that "Father Arne [Panula] liked to blame all of society's ills on this slow liberal drift. He believed that Catholic priests had lost their way and sexually abused children because of efforts to liberalize Mass by the Vatican in the sixties, which had led to 'confusion' for men of the cloth." The referenced source does not mention the alleged "liberalize Mass by the Vatican in the

sixties" as one of the priest's alleged concerns. It is pure invention.

**-Page 233:** Gore writes: "Just as the Culture of Life Foundation had done during the 2000 election campaign, Opus Dei-linked institutions pulled out all the stops to prevent an Obama victory." This is false. The Culture of Life Foundation has no institutional relationship with Opus Dei. Furthermore, Opus Dei has not participated either directly or indirectly in any electoral process.

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## ***Chapter 12. There be dragons (pp. 237-253)***

**-Page 237:** He states that "for Villa Tevere [Opus Dei's headquarters in Rome], the film [he is referring to the

film *There Be Dragons*, in which some episodes of St Josemaría's life are told] was the culmination of a years-long dream to bring the founder to the silver screen." The dream is and would have been entirely legitimate, but, as film producer Heriberto Schoeffer explains, "the film was entirely my idea, and it came to me at the beginning of 2004, after having read the account of the crossing of the Pyrenees by Saint Josemaría and his companions in the biography written by Andrés Vázquez de Prada" (Clarification by Schoeffer, 19-10-2024).

**-Page 237:** On the same page he adds that "Del Portillo had sent one member to Hollywood to set up a film company in the early nineties, and his successor Echevarría had become obsessed with the idea of a biopic after watching a film about the life of Padre Pio." This is false.

Del Portillo did not send anyone to Hollywood to create a company; the protagonist is Heriberto Schoeffer, a member of Opus Dei who moved to Los Angeles with his family in 1992, with the desire to start a professional career in the film industry. Schoeffer states: "When I had the opportunity to tell Don Álvaro about it, he agreed on the project's interest and applauded my decision, which was entirely mine and Marisa's, my wife" (Schoeffer's clarification, 20-10-2024). In addition, Echevarría did not have any such "obsession" with the project. As Schoeffer explains, "Knowing that I was working on that script, he encouraged me with the project. And when he saw the film about Father Pio, he asked to be informed" (Schoeffer's clarification, 19-10-2024).

**-Page 237:** He notes that "Urgency about the project ramped up after

*The Da Vinci Code*: a production company called 'The Work LLC' was set up in California and a script commissioned for the project, tentatively called *The Founder*." Gore uses the passive voice – "was set up" – to suggest a secret hidden hand where there are in fact concrete names. That company was started and owned by Schoeffer. And it was not the case of "a script was commissioned" but rather it was personally commissioned by Schoeffer himself. As he himself explains: "When you make a film, you usually set up an SPE—a special purpose company—in anticipation of some legal dispute arising from the film. These companies usually have the same name as the film. In our case, initially, my company 'IMMI Pictures' was the sole partner, and I had hired the initial scriptwriter; she titled the script as *The Work*, so a limited liability company was created under that name. Later, *The*

Work was dissolved and the rights to the script were transferred in full to my production company IMMI Pictures, and then sold to the Mount Santa Fe Production Company, which eventually produced the film "*There Be Dragons*." On the other hand, Schoeffer continues, "the idea of making this film had nothing to do with *The Da Vinci Code*, although the proximity of the two projects in time offered an interesting opportunity" (Schoeffer clarification, 20-10-2024).

**-Page 238:** Referring to the same film, Gore insinuates that "after the script was rewritten, the financing for the film magically came together, thanks to two Spanish supernumerary lawyers—and a mysterious foundation in Spain that people on the film referred to only as the 'golden investor'." The author cites as a source a member of the production team (Ezpeleta) who,

when asked, explained something that was common knowledge: that the Spanish network Antena 3 was one of the private investors who invested the most capital, that there was no "magic" but instead more than a hundred investors from various countries, and that the "anonymous" lawyers mentioned by Gore do have names; in fact it was one of them, the producer Gómez Sancha, who coordinated these efforts by travelling to numerous countries and reaching agreements with each investor. According to Ezpeleta, the reference to the "mysterious foundation" or "golden investor" is a fantasy falsely attributed to him (Clarification by Dámaso Ezpeleta, 15-10-2024).

**-Page 238:** It mentions that "cast members" of the film stayed in an Opus Dei residence in Buenos Aires. This is false: the cast and crew of the film never stayed in an Opus Dei

centre. As Fr. John Wauck (the film's consultant for the issues that had to do with the character of St Josemaría) explained, the only visits made to that house were by a few actors, who had roles related to St Josemaría, for professional reasons, to get an idea of what a chapel is like, etc.

**-Page 238:** On the same page Gore makes a forced triple-jump to connect the story of this fictional film with his tale of "human trafficking" ("the residence in Buenos Aires, where it now entertained the *There Be Dragons* cast and crew, had allegedly been home to one of Opus Dei's largest and most ruthless slave labor operations"). Opus Dei has strongly denied any allegations of labour exploitation, but the author once again avoids allowing any room for our response, such as this one.

**-Page 238:** Gore claims that "this prime piece of real estate had effectively been gifted to the organisation by the military junta in 1972, in a sign of its cozy relationship with a regime that, at the time, was 'disappearing' tens of thousands of people across the country—first torturing them in illegal detention centres and then throwing them, drugged and beaten, out of military planes over the Atlantic Ocean." Among the various falsehoods, it should be made clear that:

a) the CUDES Residence (Centro Universitario de Estudios, the centre to which he refers) is owned by the Asociación para el Fomento de la Cultura (a public charity) and was built with the contribution of hundreds of people on land donated for this purpose by the City of Buenos Aires in 1972.

b) There is no historical record or scholarship accusing the military junta that ended in 1973, presided over by Lanusse, of "tens of thousands of disappeared."

Apparently the author confuses this period with the dictatorship that began on 24 March 1976, of which Lanusse was an outspoken critic.

c) CUDES was inaugurated, while still under construction, in February 1982. Since 1983, the third floor of the building has housed the offices of the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei, made available by the Asociación para el Fomento de la Cultura.

**-Page 238:** He describes again an alleged "recruitment" of numerary assistants through a hospitality school, reproducing without question falsehoods in articles by Paula Bistagnino in the magazine *Anfibia*. Falsehoods such as that they were "recruited" at the age of twelve, that

the sole purpose was to obtain vocations, that they were "pressured" into joining, "that their families would be rewarded in heaven if they agreed—or condemned to hell if they refused," etc. are alleged. These accusations and others contained in this chapter refer in a misleading and completely out-of-context manner to a socio-educational initiative called ICES (mentioned in the clarifications to page 7 and page 150 given above), which was approved and operated under regular supervision of all relevant state authorities for more than 40 years. A wealth of information and answers to these falsehoods about the functioning and purpose of this school can be found on the website <https://www.infoycontexto.com/en>

**-Page 239 ff.:** Provides a gloomy account of a day in the life of the women who worked in that residence, backed up by a generic

note in which the author claims to have collected testimonies from numerary assistants who worked there. Along with elements taken from reality, there are many subjective impressions, as well as fictitious elements that detract from the credibility of the whole, such as the claim that the numeraries "sang the Preces" or that "they swore allegiance to the Prelature" in these prayers. In fact, the prayer called "Preces" is not sung and its contents do not include an oath of fidelity to the Prelature, as the readers can verify for themselves at [this link](#).

**-Page 240:** The author refers to Father Danilo Eterovic, born in Bolivia to a Croatian family, but who lived in Argentina from 1975 to 2014, when he passed away (except for the three years when he returned to Bolivia from 1978 to 1980 to begin the apostolic work of Opus Dei in that country). Since his youth, he had

been living with chronic pain due to serious spinal problems. His tragic death was the consequence of a long psychiatric illness, with very difficult consequences, which he fought against day by day with the help of everyone. The directors of Opus Dei, his friends and loved ones never ceased to support him, accompanying him in his painful process and counting on competent professionals. The logical discretion to protect his person and privacy has allowed wild theories to proliferate on blogs and websites about an alleged neglect in his accompaniment, when the reality is quite the opposite. During his final years, his care and attention had intensified, as his doctor (who is not a member of Opus Dei) and so many other people can testify. His death was deeply painful for those who accompanied him until his final days. It is sordid and cruel to use the painful memory of such a beloved

person to manipulate history. The testimonies made about Father Danilo have been on the Opus Dei website since his death.

**-Page 241:** Another example of manipulation of sources is the statement that "Joaquín Navarro-Valls, the numerary and longtime spokesman for Pope John Paul II, grandly announced that Villa Tevere was receiving messages of thanks almost daily [for the film *There Be Dragons*] from divorcees inspired by the film to return to their wives, from parents and children who reconciled after years apart." When the reader goes to the original source, he sees that the statement by Navarro-Valls (one of the investors in the film) refers to messages of thanks received by "the film's producers." The figure of "Villa Tevere" [Opus Dei headquarters] is, once again, the result of the author's subtle manipulation of his sources.

**-Page 241:** While it is not relevant to the substance of this document how much the producers of *There Be Dragons* made or lost, Gore's statement below is another striking illustration of his lack of attention to data: "Almost all of the \$40 million budget was lost. Worldwide, it grossed just \$4 million." The curious thing is that the source he cites (IMDbPro) speaks of a budget of \$36 million. On the other hand, the world familiar with this business sector knows that these box office figures refer to the weeks of the initial release, and that a film sometimes has a long run: this one, in particular, is available as of today (October 2024) on Netflix and other digital platforms.

**-Page 242:** Here it states that "right from the start, [Escrivá] made it clear that IESE was an apostolic mission of Opus Dei with a specific goal—to groom a new generation of

businessmen who prioritized their religious values over everything else." But the note supporting this statement (which refers to González Gullón and Coverdale's *Opus Dei: A History*) states something different: "The school's aim would be to prepare technically excellent business people who would try to incarnate gospel values in the world of business without limiting themselves to the search for economic success." Once again, he uses reliable sources but attributes to them false statements.

**-Pages 242-3:** He refers to the alumni of the IESE business school as the "brightest business minds." And he states that "they were prime recruitment material for the many numerary and supernumerary academics who taught there." The description denotes ignorance of IESE or the universities to which he alludes, where a good part of the

students are not Catholics or even religious. It is precisely in this openness to all that the Christian identity of this school, which offers Christian education to anyone who wants it, is shown. Linking "the brightest business minds" and "recruitment material" seems a contradiction in itself.

**-Page 242:** He describes the Clover Foundation as follows: "Set up in the eighties as a charity dedicated to helping young people in poorer countries to get a decent education, Clover had by 2010 strayed a long way from its founding principles to become a major source of finance for Opus Dei vanity projects around the world." The reality is that, from its inception, the initiators of this foundation (Francisco Gómez Franco and Begoña Laresgoiti Foix) had the objective "to create a foundation that would support projects in Mexico and other parts of the world, with a

special focus on helping organizations which are inspired by the Catholic Prelature of Opus Dei and the teachings of its founder St Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer," (see "Our history" on the foundation's website).

**-Page 242:** Gore claims that the Clover Foundation owns the building on 57th Street in New York used by IESE Business School, and alleges that the foundation had deviated from its original objectives. The Clover Foundation does own the building and IESE pays rent for its use. Again, the Clover website can be consulted for information about its mission.

**-Page 243:** Gore writes about the Association for Cultural Interchange (ACI) and its alleged secret relationship with Opus Dei. See the ACI website for an explanation of its relationship with Opus Dei.

**-Page 243:** He mentions other foundations that act as a support for the educational, formation and social activities that have the formation and spiritual support Opus Dei. The author describes them as "financial entanglements." The reality is much simpler. In this interview on "Opus Dei and financial management," one of the Prelature's regional administrators explains:

*I find this easy to understand when you start from the Statutes of Opus Dei, which say that the owners and managers of apostolic instruments are responsible for them, and they use resources acquired by their own efforts, as well as civil support. The Statutes establish that the Prelature is not usually the owner of any of these assets or instruments used in initiatives that receive its spiritual assistance (cf. no. 122). Simply put, Opus Dei could legitimately own those instruments, but it doesn't need to.*

*This is one of many innovations of Opus Dei. It encourages and strengthens Christians' personal responsibility. Without needing any official "seal of approval" from the Church, they personally commit to social, educational, or other initiatives inspired by the Christian spirit. They use their own skills and strengths and risk their own investments. In the text I cited earlier, Vatican II points to this as a characteristic of the laity.*

Similar explanations were given to the author during the period of his research, yet he does not even mention them.

**-Page 244:** He goes on to state that "such spending patterns were mirrored by the hundreds of other Opus Dei foundations around the world, which publicly touted the support they provided to underprivileged communities—but which secretly diverted most of their

funds to finance a global infrastructure of residences and grassroot initiatives aimed at one thing only: recruitment." Throughout the writing process, it was suggested to the author on several occasions that he might visit many of the social initiatives promoted by Opus Dei individuals in several of the countries he visited. The author declined these invitations, citing time constraints or similar reasons, and always preferred office conversations on organisational or logistical matters. This may also be the reason for his lack of knowledge of the reality. On the other hand, the aim of all these residences and initiatives is purely formative and apostolic, not "recruitment."

Regarding the social service initiatives, see the links included later in the comments on page 319. Many of these initiatives participate in the Be Do Care Forum, which was

launched in anticipation of the upcoming centenary of Opus Dei.

**-Page 244:** He writes that "care was taken to distance the Prelature from such initiatives [formative, educational, social, etc.]—and not only to safeguard the Opus Dei's reputation, but also to guard against scaring off recruits by openly advertising their links to the prelature." This is false: Opus Dei requires any initiatives that receive assistance from Opus Dei to make this link public. When the author enquired about this during his stay in Rome, it was pointed out to him that they all specify this relationship on their respective websites and information materials. An updated description of these initiatives and their relationship with Opus Dei can be found in this article.

**-Pages 244-5:** Referring to a court case, he once again describes as

"fictitious" the real autonomy of the undertakings promoted by members of Opus Dei, as if the entities promoting and owning these initiatives were a kind of "cover" to avoid institutional responsibilities in the event of possible problems. However, this autonomy is the truth, as explained in the same interview mentioned above on Opus Dei and Financial Management:

*Anyone who wants to see "cover-ups" will see them in all of the cases I've described, but the truth is that these are initiatives of free individuals, managed by their own boards, with the same legal standards and transparency of any other foundation or association in the country.*

*To explain it in the reverse: if the owner or manager of any of these instruments wanted to stop contributing to or collaborating with an Opus Dei initiative, they could.*

*Opus Dei neither owns nor manages them, and would have no power to stop it.*

*As I said before, there are other legitimate, legal ways of organizing things, but Opus Dei has chosen not to accumulate wealth as an expression of its foundational charism. There are two reasons for this. First, the Work wants its apostolic work to be civil instruments that lay people are fully responsible for, without involving the ecclesiastical structure. Secondly, the Work wants to possess as few assets as possible (only those that are strictly necessary).*

**-Page 245:** Quoting a newspaper source, he states that "at the same time, Opus Dei was engaged in a legal tussle with six numerary assistants in Spain who had made similar allegations: they asserted that it had failed to pay their social security contributions, that they'd been

forced to work without contracts, and had no say over where they worked or what they did." In the report referred to by Gore, the women are not identified, but based on the given data, it could be about three financial claims against the Prelature. None of these involved a court complaint. Nor did the cases involve numerary assistants.

**-Page 246:** This refers to a case of abuse by a priest. The Prelature cooperated at all times with the canonical process, in accordance with the information that gradually came to light and as the facts became known. It tried to do everything possible to ask for forgiveness, compensate the victim—who was a university student—and make its request for forgiveness public. In describing the priest, Gore claims—without any foundation whatsoever—that "at one stage, he [this priest]

seemed destined to be a potential future prelate."

**-Page 247:** Gore notes that "the pope also ordered the organisation to cease the practice of numeraries passing on to their superiors information gleaned from others as part of spiritual direction—during the 'chat.' Echevarría was forced to send out a pastoral letter to 'clarify' the 'misunderstanding'." His source is González Gullón and Coverdale's *Opus Dei: a History (1928-2016)* but nowhere in that book is there any mention of an intervention by the pontiff or an attempt to "clarify a misunderstanding." In fact, the episode is recounted on pages 292-293 of Volume II of Gullón and Coverdale's book: it was a government measure, studied in agreement with the Holy See, to bring the practice of spiritual accompaniment into line with the greater sensitivity to privacy in

society and in the Church. What it really says in that source is: "To avoid any impression of intrusion into the conscience of individuals, and after studying these issues with the Holy See, Echevarría addressed these questions in a 2011 pastoral letter. In response to the concern about privacy, he established that priests and others providing spiritual guidance should not normally discuss with anyone else what they have been told. if, in some exceptional case, they felt in conscience that the person speaking with them needed guidance they could not give, they should urge that person to seek it directly.

Alternatively, they could offer to seek advice on their behalf, but only with their explicit permission. In response to the concern about possible confusion between spiritual guidance and governance of the Work, he stressed that the local directors and the priests who impart

spiritual direction have no power of governance over the people they guide." The same indication was also transmitted to all members of the Work in a clear way from the regional governing bodies in 2011.

**-Page 247:** He again insinuates that Opus Dei had kept its "internal regulations" hidden from the Vatican. He adds: "Hiding its internal rules allowed Opus Dei to dodge what might have been a serious investigation of its practices had the 'instructions' and 'experiences' been openly published." This is a falsehood. Although it does not cite any source, it probably refers to a complaint filed by Mr. Antonio Moya for alleged "institutional regulatory fraud," disseminated by the website [www.religiondital.org](http://www.religiondital.org) in July 2023. As Opus Dei made clear at the time, "the Holy See has not only the Statutes of the Prelature (since it is the Holy See that has promulgated

them) and other norms, such as the *Ratio Institutionis* (also approved by the competent Dicastery), but also all the writings of the founder and all the documents that contain experiences of formation, spirit and government of Opus Dei: *De Spiritu*, *Regional Experiences*, *Catechism of the Prelature of Opus Dei*, *Experience on formation at the local level*, etc." In that same article, information is given on all these documents, some of which are on the Opus Dei website, and all of which are in the possession of the Holy See.

**-Page 247:** This refers to the case of abuse by a lay teacher in a secondary school. The only legal information it gives about this case is that "the numerary was later sentenced to eleven years in prison." As is common knowledge in Spain, the Supreme Court subsequently reduced the sentence to two years because of "insufficient evidence and

an evaluative discourse that we cannot endorse." The purpose of this clarification is not to take sides in a case that is still open, but to highlight the author's selective use of information and sources, which is sometimes as serious as or more serious than false or erroneous information.

**-Pages 248-9:** It is striking that in the pages he devotes to such a public body as the *Catholic Information Center* in Washington he also uses anonymous sources: "Author interview with a Catholic Information Center board member who was serving at the time, February 2023." At this point in the book, the reader begins to suspect that there is a recurring technique of taking creative license with what he puts into the mouths of his anonymous sources.

**-Pages 250-253:** In the final pages of the chapter, Gore returns to the alleged connections between Opus Dei and conservative politics in the United States, mainly based on the friendships of two prominent Catholics (Leonard Leo and Anton Scalia) with people from Opus Dei, or their participation in "a talk at a center of the Work," in "a spiritual retreat," or in an activity led by a priest of the prelature, etc. According to Gore, through these individuals "Opus Dei's penetration of Washington's political and judicial world would now reach unprecedented levels" and "the recruitment of Leonard Leo would cement ties between Opus Dei and the U.S. Supreme Court that had been developing for decades." In fact, Leo and Scalia have themselves explained that they are not members of Opus Dei. Furthermore, Opus Dei does not give political guidance or advice of any kind. As the prelate of

Opus Dei stated when asked by a journalist about these fanciful connections:

*"There are good Catholics who vote for different parties or candidates, according to their sensibilities. I will not tell them, nor will anyone in Opus Dei tell them, who to vote for, who to support or what cause to promote. Nor would it be appropriate to indirectly create a climate in formation activities that would take for granted that there is only one legitimate option for people in Opus Dei. Loving freedom implies loving pluralism. In these media to which you refer, hypotheses and conspiracy theories are made, mentioning people with names and surnames who are not, however, members of Opus Dei. I am sure they are very good Catholics, but the truth is simply manipulated in order to compromise a Church institution in political matters. On the other hand, I wish there was a better*

*understanding of the freedom of the laity in the political, social and cultural spheres. ... In the area of public administration, each Christian has the responsibility to form his or her conscience according to the social doctrine of the Church, to inform himself or herself about the proposals of candidates or parties, to reflect on the best option for the common good and to decide freely. For this reason, the work of spiritual accompaniment carried out by Opus Dei avoids interfering in their legitimate earthly choices. Respect for the autonomy of lay people who participate in politics (whether or not they are members of Opus Dei) is key: their successes and mistakes are their responsibility, not that of the Church. To attribute to Opus Dei or to the Church as a whole the cultural, political, economic or social initiatives of its faithful is clericalism."*

*(The Pillar, Interview with  
Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz,  
2-11-2024)*

**-Page 254:** He mentions a judge who "had also attended an Opus Dei retreat at the prelature's \$10 million, 844-acre property near the Shenandoah Mountains." The note shows that he is referring to the Longlea Conference Center, which is not "owned" by the Prelature but by the developer of that name. On the other hand, the question that comes to the reader's mind is: does it make sense to always mention the cost of a church, a retreat centre, a university, etc.?

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## ***Chapter 13. Trump Card (pp. 254-277)***

**-Page 257:** He writes that "among the hundreds of guests [at Scalia's funeral] was Vice President Joe Biden, former Vice President Dick Cheney, Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz, and a small delegation from Opus Dei that included Father Connor." This is false: Opus Dei sent no delegation. The priest he mentions attended as one of the faithful because he was a friend of the deceased.

**-Page 260-1:** This deals with various conservative foundations in the United States, and Gore tries to bring them into the orbit of Opus Dei because one was a friend of a particular person, and another was an acquaintance of another, and so on. Fortunately, the protagonists of these conjectures know the story

better and know that these tales are the fruit of the author's fantasy.

**-Pages 261-2:** Gore comments on further vicissitudes of Banco Popular and connects them with Opus Dei. Once again he resorts to the false attribution of a link between the bank and Opus Dei, for which many explanations have already been given. Furthermore, he makes statements that are odd coming from a financial journalist. For example, contrary to what Gore claims, "it is neither strange nor unorthodox," as Aparicio notes, "for a bank to give guarantees with its balance sheet assets" (clarification by Francisco Aparicio on 12-11-2024).

**-Page 266:** Referring to the fall of Banco Popular, Gore asserts that "Opus Dei had lost the institution that had powered its growth for sixty years." For the author, there is only power and money. From such a point

of view, without Franco and without Banco Popular, Opus Dei should have disappeared long ago. It is striking that the author did not ask himself why this has not been the case.

Perhaps that would have opened up other interpretations: for example, that what gives life and continuity to an institution of the Church is its charism and that this charism be incarnated in the lives of individual people.

**-Page 266:** "Francis was keen to put a distinctive stamp on his papacy and return the Church to what he considered the true mission of Jesus Christ, after more than thirty years of domination by conservative forces under John Paul II and Benedict XVI. 'How I would love a Church that is poor and for the poor!' he told the press in one of his first public addresses after being elected to the papacy." Gore applies his reductionist and polarising formula

of conservatives and progressives, bad and good, etc. St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI need no defence of their commitment to the poor; one need only look at their actions and read their speeches, homilies and encyclicals. One example, among hundreds, John Paul II said: "In the faces of the poor I see the face of Christ. In the life of the poor I see the life of Christ reflected" (John Paul II, speech in the Tondo neighbourhood, Philippines 1981). Benedict XVI, at the inauguration of his pontificate, longed that "freed from material and political burdens and privileges, the Church can devote herself better and in a truly Christian way to the whole world" (Benedict XVI, Speech at the Konzerthaus in Freiburg im Breisgau, 25.09.2011).

**-Page 268:** He refers to Cardinal George Pell, saying that he "was known disparagingly as 'Pedopell' and 'Pell Pot' by some at the Vatican,

because of a police investigation into allegations that he had sexually abused children." But Gore conceals that George Pell was unanimously acquitted of all charges by the High Court of Australia. If only out of respect for the late Cardinal Pell, the decent thing would have been to mention the acquittal. At the end of the paragraph Gore adds that "Opus Dei members would regularly visit the disgraced archbishop in prison." For a Christian, visiting a person in prison is a work of mercy even if they had been found guilty.

**-Page 268:** It states that "the prelature sought to curry favor with him [Cardinal Bergoglio], sending Mariano Fazio, a warm, friendly fellow Argentinian, to the General Conference of Bishops of Latin America, where he had the opportunity to get to know this rising star." This is false: the prelature did nothing. Mariano Fazio, who was at

that time the Rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, was appointed by the Holy See as an expert for the 5th General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (Aparecida, Brazil).

**-Page 268:** "Opus Dei took over a school in a poor neighbourhood of Buenos Aires—something completely out of character for the organization, which until then had only really run academies for Argentina's upper classes." It is untrue to say that Opus Dei is indifferent to people who are in need; one can easily find initiatives all over the world, started by members of Opus Dei and their friends, aimed at people without resources in the field of education, health, etc. In his conversations with us, we offered the author an opportunity to visit some of these initiatives, but he ignored the proposals. To provide an example,

this link contains a document from the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo about numerous social initiatives encouraged during his time as prelate, similar to those promoted during the life of Saint Josemaría and also afterwards. See also: 40 initiatives against poverty. One of the first activities launched in preparation for Opus Dei's centenary is the Be Do Care Forum, which in its meetings in Rome and Sao Paulo has so far brought together the promoters of some 130 social initiatives in 45 countries inspired by the teachings of the founder of Opus Dei. The next meeting of this Forum will take place in Kenya in October 2025.

**-Page 268:** Commenting on Bergoglio's years as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Gore states as a fact that "While it bothered Bergoglio that he had no jurisdiction over Opus Dei, they seemed to be doing all the right

things." Gore backs this up in a footnote which simply states: "Author's interview with a person familiar with the pope's thinking, November 2023." He fabricates a fact from the conjecture of an (anonymous) person (supposedly) knowledgeable of the Pope's thinking.

**-Page 269:** Contains the following falsehood: "A numerary [from Argentina] had donated all her earnings and three apartments she owned to the organisation. But she later decided to leave. Penniless she asked the prelature to return some of her donations so she could start a new life. Opus Dei refused to honor her request. Francis upon hearing about her plight from the Vatican's representative in Buenos Aires was incensed. He intervened, ordering the prelature to compensate the woman. Villa Tevere obeyed, although it took care to destroy any

paper trail between it and the woman, with the agreed \$40,000 settlement handed over in cash in a McDonald's paper bag." He cites as a source the "Author's interview with a person directly involved, November 2023." For the purposes of clarification, it should be noted that Opus Dei decided to help this person again upon her request, as she had been helped at other times when she needed it (especially in 1995-1996 and 2009). It should be noted that Opus Dei neither received nor had any knowledge of any order from the Holy Father regarding this matter, contrary to Gore's claims. By the time someone from the nunciature in Buenos Aires took an interest in the matter, the issue had already been resolved. The interaction with the woman was frank and cordial, as reflected in a letter she sent on March 25, 2014, and a communication with the then regional vicar on June 4 of that year.

All this was made clear verbally to the author on 17 November 2023 (in an interview during his stay in Rome). It is unfortunate that Gore chose to disregard this information. Also untrue is any involvement by "Villa Tevere," as the negotiations were carried out in Buenos Aires.

**-Page 269:** The appointment of the current prelate is discussed:

"Following the investiture of Ocáriz in January 2017, the pope made it known that he would not be ordaining the new head of Opus Dei as a bishop—contrary to the privileges afforded to the prelate's two predecessors under John Paul II. The move was a massive blow for Ocáriz, who would no longer preside over the ceremonies of new priests being ordained into the movement."

The note states: "Interview by the author with a high-ranking Opus Dei official close to Ocáriz, November 2023." The "high-ranking official" is

anonymous. If he existed, perhaps he merely explained to the author that priests are to be ordained by bishops.

What is certain is that the "hard blow" and the "privileges" are not documented outside the author's mind, and that these inventions create the frame for what follows: "The first battle between the two men (Francisco and Ocáriz) was a clear victory for Francisco. But they were just the first salvos in a war whose outcome was far from certain. Across the Atlantic, Opus Dei was forming powerful new alliances that might tip the balance back in its favour" (referring to alleged connections and influence in US politics).

Leaving aside his metaphor of battle and salvos, so unsuitable in describing the relationship between the pope and the prelate, the author once again speculates without any

kind of documentary support, in a way closer to a fictional narrative than a journalistic report. In this case, it can be supposed that the author does so in order to invent a new conspiracy theory that he will develop in the following pages.

**-Page 274:** He states that "the Association for Cultural Interchange in particular became an essential source of funds, bankrolling a new \$50 million pilgrimage center called Saxum on the outskirts of Jerusalem." In addition to the explanations given above (cf. comments on p. 201), as explained to the author in one of the interviews he had in Rome, ACI was the channel to which donations from all over the world were channelled for the implementation of this project in the Holy Land.

**-Page 274:** Gore writes that "for years, the foundations [Luis Valls

Taverner's] had typically brought in around \$20 million a year—entire salaries donated by numerary members and tithes of around 10% of the income of supernumeraries." This is false. As the directors of these foundations make clear:

*"The author, who is supposed to have sufficient knowledge to make this type of analysis as he is a financial journalist, adds up the dividends and donations to foundations. The dividends went to the owners of the shares (during Luis Valls' lifetime such foundations did not have shares in Banco Popular: those they had later, to a large extent, came from inheritances, such as that of Luis Valls himself), who used them for their families; and the grants to foundations never reached \$23 million a year, and went to the Foundation encouraged by the Bank, which financed various projects, some related to Opus Dei and others not, in*

*the form of loans and to finance no more than a third of the initial investment of the respective project. For the actual figures see here: Las Fundaciones en cifras - Luis Valls Taberner. (Clarifications by Francisco Aparicio and María José Cantón, Counselors of Fomento de Fundaciones, Madrid, 10-10-2024).*

Moreover, Gore's calculations are not supported by any notes. Also note that supernumeraries do not give a tithe of their income (a claim he repeats several times throughout the book).

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## ***Chapter 14. Uprising (pp. 278-308)***

**-Pages 278-285:** In these pages the author describes the "recruitment" of young girls by numeraries, in poor rural areas, to take them to the city to study in hospitality schools run by Opus Dei members. He cites the case of two former assistant numeraries: Lucía Giménez, who ends up meeting Claudia Carrero and both connect with the lawyer Sebastián Sal (a former numerary), who works in Buenos Aires.

In these pages of the book there are very serious accusations of "recruitment and reduction to slavery of women" which, as explained above, are untrue. They make misleading and out-of-context reference to a socio-educational initiative called ICIED, which was approved and monitored by all competent state authorities for more

than 40 years. Totally contrary to what is recounted in the book, this website provides many testimonies from young women who studied there: <https://www.infoycontexto.com/en>

**-Page 281:** The accusatory tone with which these pages are written is very striking, where Opus Dei is shown throughout as an institution that "recruits" young people, using even illicit means, working to "pressure the victim into submission" and thus get him or her to become a member of the institution. This is not the experience of thousands of people who belong to Opus Dei, many since their youth. "Recruitment, pressure, submission, servitude, etc." are not neutral terms, but clear choices that imply harsh accusations. However, they do not correspond to the guidelines for good practice in the work of formation for young people given in the document "Experiences

on formation at the local level." For example: "All aspects of formation provided in St Raphael centres [centres for young people] are concerned with forming free people who know how to love and commit themselves out of love, so that when they discover their vocation, they can respond to God with generosity and total freedom. Some come to discover their call to the Work. Others decide later on to become co-operators, and others realise that their path within the Church is different, and follow it, with gratitude for the help, friendship and formation they received in the centre they have attended," or "There is a personal discernment, which each person carries out with regard to their own vocation. This is fundamental, for if the person concerned does not consider one's own vocation, it is of no use, so to speak, what others 'discern'. Anyone who claims to know with certainty

from the outside what a person's vocation is, would be overstepping their role. Moreover, the answer is only fully personal when it springs from the depths of the soul and freely embraces the whole of one's life" (at this [link](#)). As has already been mentioned in a comment above, the Church presents children and young people as models to all Catholics, such as the current Blessed (and soon to be Saint) Carlo Acutis, Francisco and Jacinta of Fatima or Saint Therese of Lisieux, who entered Carmel at a very young age.

**-Page 283:** Gore tells how the lawyer Sebastián Sal receives complaints from 43 women and sends them to the Holy See, which does not respond. How the lawyer ends up knowing that he has the support of the Holy Father, information that reaches him through a third person, who encourages him to continue with "his good work," is not

explained. The quotation in the notes is, once again, anonymous.

At no time does he give a voice to anyone from Opus Dei, nor does he mention the communiqés on this matter issued by the Prelature in Argentina since 2021 - on 18 May and 13 November (cf. Opus Dei website, Press Room section), which explain what happened in a very different way: for example, regarding the meetings between the Vicar of Opus Dei and the lawyer Sebastián Sal.

In this case, the book makes, in a sectarian way rather than as an objective investigation, a totally biased accusation. It does not give voice to a single person who lived in those same places and still belongs happily to Opus Dei. It would not have been difficult to mention that in September 2022, assistant numeraries from all over the world (there are more than 4,000 women

who live this vocation) wrote a letter to ask for respect for their choice of life, where among other things they affirm that "We are thousands of women who live the vocation of numerary assistants with freedom and joy. We are fulfilled and happy to dedicate our lives to caring for others; we choose it every day as if it were the first day or even more."

The book fundamentally dismisses the actions by Opus Dei, which on 23 June 2022 created a listening commission. Even though there were no judicial injunctions against the Prelature of Opus Dei, nor notification of complaints to the ecclesiastical authorities, nor fruitful channels of dialogue through the spokesperson for the women, the Prelature took the initiative to gather all possible aspects of the facts and conduct mentioned in the public accusations, so that they would not be limited by these alone, but would

be assessed in their context and appropriate measures would be taken in each case if necessary. Sal claims that "a calculated handwashing operation was underway." In fact, the channels made available proved to be very positive in helping to resolve individual complaints and rebuild relationships with some of the women. There was no impediment to doing the same with the rest.

Tendentiously, the book also says nothing about the Office of Healing and Resolution that Opus Dei set up in Argentina in December 2022, based on the positive experience that the listening process had for those who took part; nor that this permanent office is still open to people who belonged to Opus Dei, and who want to contact it to resolve a specific issue or talk about their experiences in the Prelature (here is the contact information).

**-Page 296:** Gareth Gore claims the Hawthorn Foundation, established in 2019 is a vehicle to create more Opus Dei schools in the USA. Hawthorn Foundation is the initiative of some members of Opus Dei and others not in Opus Dei. It has no formal relationship or agreement with the Prelature of Opus Dei.

**-Page 298:** Gore presents Pope Francis' Motu proprio modifying the canons on personal prelatures as setting free "thousands of numeraries and numerary assistants, who had for years been told that the vows they had taken to Opus Dei were binding for life." In fact, no vows had been taken by anyone in Opus Dei since 1982, and no one in Opus Dei ceased to be a member—as he supposes—because of the *Motu proprio*, nor were the formative activities changed or the centres dismantled. The daily life of the members did not change at all,

because they were all already faithful of their own dioceses and lived as such. No one is baptised, married or confirmed in Opus Dei. On the same page, to say that the Prelate's fifteen-day trip to the Philippines and Indonesia "had been filled with meetings and photo opportunities designed to shift attention away from the abuse allegations" is absurd. On the trips, the Prelate dedicated himself precisely to meetings with members of the Work and with those who participate in the means of formation, and as is normal they take photos as souvenirs of such meetings. Finally, Gore's link between Sal's denunciation and the first *Motu Proprio* is quite dubious to say the least, bearing in mind that the restructuring of the Roman Curia had begun years earlier. For more details, see the [statement on journalistic speculation following the Motu Proprio and the accusations of](#)

43 women, which Gore does not mention either.

**-Page 300:** Gore attributes to Juan Pablo Cannata, former spokesman for Opus Dei in Argentina, statements that seek to support his speculation about the intentions behind the creation of the Listening Commission mentioned in the previous point. As has already been explained at various points in this document, the author's statements about the intentions of the Listening Commission are personal conjectures that have little to do with reality. The quote attributed to Cannata is false, as it does not reflect his thoughts on the subject at all. Moreover, the author violated basic ethical principles of journalism by using and twisting a private conversation that took place in an "off the record" context as if it were an official statement. Cannata accompanied the author to a retreat house and to the

Basilica of Luján. He did not grant a formal interview to the author, precisely out of respect for the role of the institution's current spokesperson in Argentina, with whom the author met on several occasions during his stay in the country.

In any case, the Listening Commission was a positive process that allowed a comprehensive assessment of the case over the decades and the initiation of a process of dialogue, as officially published in a statement on 28 September 2024 (published in English on 1 October 2024): "Opus Dei has always respected the voice of women, and proof of this is the creation of multiple channels and tools for listening, dialogue and healing to which some of the women in the group have approached and have stated that they did not share

the serious accusations that have been made."

**-Pages 301-302:** He refers to a showing of the Disney documentary *The Pope Answers*, in which the Pope listens to ten young people. One of them tells him that he was abused by a lay teacher of Opus Dei (this refers to the same person mentioned in the explanation on p. 247). The Pope listens to him as he listens to the others, and engages with him to listen to his request. But this has nothing to do with the case of Argentina cited below, nor with the Extraordinary General Congress held in Rome from 12 to 16 April 2023. The author cites a communiqué of 12 April 2023, which was published as a complement to an earlier communiqué issued on 4 April of the same year and is not related to the case mentioned in the documentary, but was in response to a complaint made in 2020 to the Coordinator for

the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons about a sexual assault that occurred at a camp organised in 1989 in Buenos Aires. In that communiqué it was explained that the accused ceased to belong to Opus Dei in September 1990 at the request of the relevant authorities. Both communiqués reflect the prelature's commitment to transparency and support for the persons concerned, following the protocols established since 2013 in line with the provisions of the Holy See. See: the statement of 4 April and the statement of 12 April.

**-Page 302:** Gore writes that "At the Congress in April 2023, only minor revisions to the statutes were put forward. They were presented to the Vatican a few weeks later. Frustrated with Opus Dei's refusal to embrace real reform, Francis twice summoned Ocáriz to the papal apartment to explain why the

movement hadn't heeded his call." In fact, both interviews took place at the request of Opus Dei, not the Holy See. On the other hand, the author does not explain how he became aware of the outcome of the congress, as he does not cite a source. He gives the reason why and the fact that these meetings took place based on another anonymous source ("Author's interview with a person who knew about both meetings," he says in the note).

**-Pages 302-303:** Gore reports the complaint to the Vatican by two former numeraries, regulars on a website critical of Opus Dei (Antonio Moya and Carmen Pérez), which is echoed by Religión Digital (as is often the case with anything related to the relations between Opus Dei and the Holy See). He does not, however, cite the institutional response: 'Religión Digital' and a letter denouncing an alleged "normative fraud" in which,

as has already been pointed out in two previous passages of this document, it is explained that "the Holy See not only has the Statutes of the Prelature (since it is the Holy See that has promulgated them) and other normative guidelines, such as the *Ratio Institutionis* (also approved by the competent Dicastery), but also all the writings of the founder and all the non-normative documents that gather together experiences of formation, spirit and government of Opus Dei: *De Spiritu*, *Regional Experiences*, *Catechism of the Prelature of Opus Dei*, *Experiences on formation at the local level*, etc."

**-Page 306:** The Pope, according to Gore, has to handle the situation regarding Opus Dei "with understandable caution" because of the alleged influence of the Work and its alliance with anti-Francis factions, but he provides no information or sources (not even anonymous ones)

to support either the reference to caution or to the alliances. Needless to say, such speculation is false.

**-Page 307:** Opus Dei's double game—in the author's mind—is that, on the one hand, its prelate speaks of unity with the Pope (but Gore subtly implies that he awaits the Pope's death) and, on the other, seeks to participate in the design of a project to document profiles of future candidates for the next conclave. This is an insinuation based on Opus Dei's apparently "courting" Busch. And to top off Opus Dei's loss of influence in the election of the future pope, he mentions the only two cardinals who come from Opus Dei's clergy, who are no longer electors. In fact, the two of them both participated only in the conclave that elected Benedict XVI, since in the conclave that elected Francis, Cardinal Herranz was no longer an elector. In addition to implying a

more than dubious unity of mind between two such diverse persons, it seems an exaggeration to say that 2 out of 117 (2005) or 1 out of 115 (2013) is a "powerful" presence.

**-Page 308:** He states that if Opus Dei does not change, it will cause the Pope to intervene. The Holy Father has supreme power over any institution of the Church, so it is easy to make this generalisation. He points to the sale of real estate that Opus Dei is supposedly carrying out as aimed at obtaining new financial resources that would give it liquidity to face its current crises. "Liquidating such overt Opus Dei assets and shifting the money to arms-length nonprofits ... is also a way of creating a hidden cache of financial power to continue fighting the guerrilla war to remake society in Escrivá's image." The reality is that the two properties he mentions were used for non-profit activities (retreats and conferences,

student residence) and were not owned by Opus Dei, but by their respective proprietors. He himself quotes the statement in which it says that the proceeds from the sale of Castello di Urio will go to the owner. His reasoning, besides being false, is extremely convoluted.

**-Pages 1-314:** The preceding pages have attempted to deal with some of the most relevant issues. But throughout the book there are many other factual errors on minor matters which nevertheless reflect carelessness in verifying names, places, situations, frames, etc. Here are a few examples:

- Gore notes that Opus Dei works in 66 countries (p. 9), although the reality is that it is in 72 countries.
- He writes of someone who "began receiving regular spiritual direction from Father

Patricio Mata—a numerary priest from Spain who prefers to go by Father Luke" (p. 276), but the reality is that the priest goes by Father Luke because that is his name; he has never been called Patricio.

- He speaks of a retreat house which "had been baptized Molinoviejo by the founder, after an old windmill on the grounds" (p. 72) but in fact there was no windmill: it is named after a water mill. Of another house called Wynnview he says that it is "a ski chalet in Vermont" (p. 109), when it is an old farmhouse converted to house bunk beds.
- He indicates that St Josemaría began to work with the Apostolic Ladies in July (p. 39), although it is documented that he had joined as early as June 1st.

- He refers to Professor Reyes Calderón as "deacon of the Economics Department of the University of Navarre" (p. 264), when in fact she was the "dean," etc.

**-Pages 309-314:** In this concluding section ("Acknowledgements"), Gore writes: "I believe that Luis Valls-Taberner was as much a victim of Opus Dei's machinations as the thousands of others who passed through its abusive system of coercion and control. I believe that Don Luis was, like so many others drawn into the organization, a kind-hearted and devout Catholic seeking to do good in this world—only to be manipulated and pressured into turning over his life, his family, and his bank account to the insatiable demands of the founder and the wider organization. I hope my writing reflects the great admiration

that those around him had for Don Luis."

In fact, Gore's portrayal of Luis Valls is one of the most implausible elements of the book: on the one hand, he describes the banker as an intelligent, independent and determined person, capable of transforming a small bank into one of the most profitable in the world; he is admired by his employees and enjoys great prestige among his fellow presidents of other banks, the world of culture, social actors (trade unions, NGOs, religious bodies), and so on. On the other hand, it falsely portrays him as corrupt, as the leader of a covert aid network, who cheated his brother and his family. And all this supposedly going on for decades. In short, someone who led a double or triple life. The reality is very different, and so are the fruits of his life and the unanimous testimony of the people who knew

and worked with him for decades, who say the complete opposite. Regarding his work and his person, we recommend the website prepared by his friends and colleagues on the occasion of his forthcoming centenary: Luis Valls Taberner. Gore's depiction of Luis Valls, much like his portrayal of Saint Josemaría, is distorted and suffers from an absolute lack of fairness and objectivity.

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