

## “We find our sanctity in the middle of the world”: Father José Luis Múzquiz and the Beginnings of *Opus Dei* in the United States, 1949–1961

*Federico M. Requena\**

*Servant of God Father José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel helped found and consolidate Opus Dei in the United States between 1949 and 1961. Having worked closely with Opus Dei’s founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, during the 1930s and 1940s in Spain, Múzquiz was prepared to introduce Opus Dei in the context of 1950s U.S. Catholicism. While showing great fidelity to the foundational charism, Múzquiz strove to “Americanize” Opus Dei. This study of Múzquiz’s role in spreading the message of the universal call to holiness and Opus Dei’s teachings on the sanctification of work and society highlights continuities and discontinuities between Opus Dei’s message and pre-conciliar U.S. Catholicism.*

In March 1949, a thirty-six-year-old Spanish priest, José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel, visited Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch (1887–1958) of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, Stritch granted his blessing to *Opus Dei*, an institution of the Catholic Church emphasizing the call to holiness through the ordinary activities of life. *Opus Dei* soon began its activities in his diocese.<sup>2</sup> Múzquiz (called “Father Joseph” by Americans) spurred *Opus*

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1. José Luis Múzquiz’s process of canonization was officially introduced on June 2, 2011, in the Archdiocese of Boston. For Múzquiz’s life, see the brief biography: John F. Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots: Father Joseph Múzquiz and the Growth of Opus Dei, 1912–1983* (New York: Scepter, 2009).

2. See José Luis Múzquiz to Josemaría Escrivá, July 7, 1949, General Archive of the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, Rome (hereafter AGP), series M.1.1, 490707. The letters of Múzquiz to St. Josemaría will simply be cited as “Letter,” followed by the date and archival reference.

*Dei*'s growth in the United States between 1949 and 1961.<sup>3</sup> In 1961, he departed for Rome to form part of *Opus Dei*'s general council. He returned to the United States in 1976, remaining until his death in June 1983.<sup>4</sup>

Múzquiz's legacy to U.S. Catholicism can be gleaned from his favorite saying: "We find our sanctity in the middle of the world."<sup>5</sup> From the early 1950s, Múzquiz helped bring thousands of Catholics into contact with what would become a core teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965): the vocation to holiness shared by all the baptized.<sup>6</sup>

To explore Múzquiz's role in fostering the pursuit of sanctity among the laity, this article relies on the more than 600 lengthy letters that Múzquiz wrote from the United States to *Opus Dei*'s founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (1902–1975) during this period; Múzquiz's recollections of Escrivá and assessments of his own efforts in the U.S.; and 230 written testimonials about Múzquiz collected as part of the inquiry for his possible canonization.<sup>7</sup> The material presented here is not meant explicitly to further Múzquiz's cause for canonization, nor, because of space limitations, to provide an exhaustive history of *Opus Dei*'s first ten years in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

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3. For the history of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and *Opus Dei*, see Amadeo de Fuenmayor, Valentín Gómez-Iglesias, and José Luis Illanes, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei: The History and Defense of a Charism* (Princeton, NJ: Scepter, 1994) and John F. Coverdale, *Uncommon Faith: The Early Years of Opus Dei, 1928–1943* (Princeton, NJ: Scepter, 2002).

4. Múzquiz died in a hospital near Boston on June 21, 1983. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 131–152.

5. Recollections of Maurice Healy, Chicago, Illinois, July 31, 2009, Postulation Office for the cause of Father José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel, New York (hereafter PO-JMM), T-10159.

6. Pope Francis recently referred to Saint Josemaría Escrivá as a "precursor of Vatican II" in stressing the universal call to holiness of all the baptized (see message sent for the symposium on St. Josemaría's contribution to theology held in November 2013, available at <http://www.opusdei.org>). As Vatican II had insisted: "Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect." See Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

7. The documents can be found in the General Archive of the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, in Rome (AGP), and in the Postulation Office for the cause of Father José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel, in New York (PO-JMM).

8. The present article, therefore, contains only brief references to other members of *Opus Dei*: a few priests, but mainly lay people, celibate or married, men and women, who together with Múzquiz took part in the beginnings of *Opus Dei* in the United States. A partial history of those beginnings can be found in the work already cited, Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*. And more extensively, for the growth of *Opus Dei* in Boston, in John A. Gueguen, Jr., "The Early Days of *Opus Dei* in Boston as Recalled by the First Generation (1946–1956)," in *Studia et Documenta: Rivista dell'Istituto Storico san Josemaría Escrivá*, vol. I (2007), 65–112; and "The Early Days of *Opus Dei* in Cambridge (U.S.) as Recalled by the First Generation (1956–1961)," in *Studia et Documenta: Rivista dell'Istituto Storico san Josemaría Escrivá*, vol. IV

Nevertheless, this micro-history of the first contact between *Opus Dei*'s message, presented by Múzquiz, and pre-conciliar U.S. Catholicism can contribute to a better historical understanding of *Opus Dei*, as well as, indirectly, illustrate aspects of 1950s Catholic practice.<sup>9</sup>

### Seeking Holiness: Engineer and Priest

José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel was born in 1912 in Badajoz, Spain.<sup>10</sup> In 1935, as a student in the School of Highway Engineers, in Madrid, he first encountered Father Josemaría Escrivá.<sup>11</sup> The founder of *Opus Dei* was then thirty-three years old. Only seven years had gone by since, in 1928, he had begun *Opus Dei* with the mission of helping Catholics to seek holiness in the midst of the world. Escrivá described the vision of his foundation: "What amazes you, seems natural to me—that God has sought you out in the practice of your profession! That is how he sought the first, Peter and Andrew, James and John, beside their nets, and Matthew, sitting in the custom-house."<sup>12</sup>

José Luis Múzquiz was an outstanding engineering student. To further his studies he traveled to England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, and France. He loved sports and was very athletic; he had many friends.<sup>13</sup> Some words that he heard from the founder of *Opus Dei*, when he met him in 1935, remained deeply engraved on his heart: "There is no greater love than Love.

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(2010), 255–294. Coverdale's biography offers a brief but substantial sketch of Múzquiz's life. More detailed information about his cause of canonization can be found at <http://www.josephmuzquiz.org>.

9. Some writings about *Opus Dei* from an historical perspective have emphasized its novelty, due to its integrating of priests and laity and its distinction from both existing lay associations and religious orders. See William D. Dinges and James Hitchcock, "Roman Catholic Traditionalism and Activist Conservatism in the United States," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1991), 119. These attempts encounter greater difficulty when it comes to giving a well-rounded assessment of *Opus Dei*. We think that this is due, in part, to the scarcity of primary sources utilized, as well as to the limited number of monographic studies available in English on *Opus Dei*'s history. The author proposes that these studies also utilize a limited hermeneutic framework. See Federico M. Requena and Jose Luis Gonzalez Gullón, "Escribir la historia del *Opus Dei*: Algunas consideraciones historiográficas," in Luis Martinez Ferrer, ed., *Venti secoli di Storiografia Ecclesiastica: Bilancio e Prospettive* (Rome: EDUSC, 2010), 413–425.

10. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 3.

11. See José Luis Múzquiz, "Testimony for Josemaría Escrivá's Canonization Cause, Madrid, August 31, 1975," AGP, series A.5. This document will be cited as: Múzquiz, "Testimony." For the life of St. Josemaría Escrivá, see Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei: The Life of Josemaría Escrivá*, 3 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Scepter, 2001–2005).

12. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* (Chicago: Scepter, 1954), no. 799. For a theological consideration of the teachings of St. Josemaría, see Ernst Burkhardt and Javier López, *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanza de san Josemaría. Estudio de teología espiritual*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Rialp, 2013).

13. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 5.

All other loves are little loves.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout his life, Múzquiz vividly remembered his first visit to the *Opus Dei* residence and “meeting people who had and talked about interior life, a world that till then I knew nothing about.”<sup>15</sup>

Up to then, Múzquiz had been a member of associations such as the Jesuit-sponsored Sodality of Our Lady and Catholic Action, becoming head of its youth branch.<sup>16</sup> With this experience, Múzquiz recalled,

I began, in early 1935, to attend the circles [classes of formation on Christian life] given by the Father [as *Opus Dei* members called Escrivá]. His way of giving them was totally new to me, unique. One could see that what the Father was transmitting to us was a reality that he himself lived intensely. I also found completely new (and quite different from what I had seen in some Catholic organizations I had been in contact with) his practical way on presenting the topics. He didn’t limit himself to telling us beautiful ideas; he wanted us to put them into practice, to draw out practical consequences for our life.<sup>17</sup>

During these months, Múzquiz saw the importance that St. Josemaría gave to the oratory (chapel) in the houses of *Opus Dei* and to the liturgy as the center of Christian life.<sup>18</sup> *Opus Dei*, as the founder explained, does not have particular devotions; the root and center of its members’ spiritual life is the Mass.<sup>19</sup> Father Josemaría, already in the 1930s, encouraged the faithful to participate in the “dialogue” of the Mass and to use the missal in order to foster their personal participation. The word of God and the Eucharist were inseparably intertwined in his understanding of the liturgy.<sup>20</sup> His interest in liturgical questions had even led him to make contact with Benedictines at the Abbey of Silos and the Abbey of Montserrat, both at the forefront of the “liturgical movement” in Spain during those years.<sup>21</sup> Múzquiz noted that St.

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14. *Ibid.*, 6.

15. Letter, September 1941, AGP, series M.1.1, 410900.

16. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 24.

17. Múzquiz, “Testimony,” 4.

18. See *Ibid.*, 27.

19. *Ibid.*, 26.

20. Some of these concerns are reflected in his book, *The Way*: “Your prayer should be liturgical. How I would like to see you using the psalms and prayers from the missal, rather than private prayers of your own choice” (*The Way*, no. 86); “Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”, said our Lord. Bread and word! Host and prayer. Otherwise, you will not live a supernatural life” (*Ibid.*, no. 87); “Communion, union, conversation, confidence: word, bread, love” (*Ibid.*, no. 535). Pope Benedict XVI, with regard to St. Josemaría’s fruitful reading of Scripture, wrote: “Every saint is like a ray of light streaming forth from the word of God: we can think of ... Saint Josemaría Escrivá in his preaching of the universal call to holiness.” See *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 48.

21. See, Escrivá, *The Way: A Critical-Historical Edition prepared by Pedro Rodriguez* (New York: Scepter, 2009), commentaries on nos. 86, 365, 528, 536, 543, 704 and 971.



**José Luis Múzquiz as a civil engineer in Madrid, Spain (1940), then working for the state-run national railway system (All images courtesy of Opus Dei Communications Office, New York).**

Josemaría's concern for the liturgy did not lead him to disregard traditional devotions if they were focused on Christ. He recalled that the core of Escrivá's preaching was the invitation to unite professional work with a life of prayer and apostolic mission in the world, seeking identification with Christ.<sup>22</sup> He noted that St. Josemaría fostered devotion to Mary, especially the praying of the rosary and novenas.<sup>23</sup>

A few weeks after his graduation as a civil engineer, the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) erupted. During the war Múzquiz had almost no contact with Escrivá. But once the conflict ended, they resumed contact and Múzquiz began to take advantage of Father Josemaría's spiritual direction, his preaching, and the classes of formation he gave on Christian life (the "circles" mentioned above). In January 1940, while working as an engineer for a state-owned railroad, Múzquiz decided to request admission to *Opus Dei*.<sup>24</sup>

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22. See Múzquiz, "Testimony," 18.

23. See Múzquiz, "Testimony," 44. In this regard: "Who told you that it is not manly to make novenas? These devotions are manly, when it is a man who performs them in a spirit of prayer and penance" (*The Way* no. 574); "Have only a few private devotions, but be constant in them" (*Ibid.*, no. 552).

24. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 14–27.

Then scarcely a dozen years old, *Opus Dei* consisted of a small group of members (mostly young university students) who, together with the founder, attempted to resume normal life after three years of civil war. Escrivá knew that the message he had been entrusted with was destined for both married and unmarried people, for laity and priests, but for a number of reasons he had decided to concentrate his efforts in those years just before and after the war on university students. The young people who joined *Opus Dei* during that first period all committed themselves to celibacy.<sup>25</sup> St. Josemaría believed that, because of their youth and intellectual preparation, these first members would be able to assimilate *Opus Dei*'s spirit better and spread it more effectively among people of all walks of life. Moreover, the struggle for holiness Escrivá preached was closely tied to the effort to acquire a solid doctrinal formation through serious theological study.<sup>26</sup>

For Múzquiz, joining *Opus Dei* was distinct from his earlier commitments in the Sodality of Our Lady and Catholic Action. To be a member of *Opus Dei* was a specific vocation, requiring a complete dedication to God. *Opus Dei* members were, in the words of St. Josemaría, "contemplatives in the midst of the world," following the example of the early Christians who "remained in the middle of the street, among their equals."<sup>27</sup>

From his incorporation into *Opus Dei*, Múzquiz became an important help for Escrivá. Múzquiz took advantage of the many trips his work on the railroads required to make *Opus Dei*'s message known. Soon, in the university cities of Spain and Portugal, new vocations arose. Múzquiz helped Escrivá open new centers in those cities, mostly student residences. He began to assist the founder in governing *Opus Dei* and sometimes accompanied him on his visits to bishops in the dioceses where *Opus Dei* was working or just beginning its apostolic activity. He saw the importance that St. Josemaría gave to the spiritual and theological formation of the first members and his effort to begin the first Center of Studies in 1941 in Madrid.<sup>28</sup>

In 1943, Múzquiz reduced his engineering work to have more time to assist Escrivá in *Opus Dei*'s expansion and government and to intensify his philosophy and theology studies in preparation for priestly ordination.<sup>29</sup>

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25. For the history of *Opus Dei*'s first years, see Coverdale, *Uncommon Faith*, 122–165.

26. Holiness without doctrine, Múzquiz had heard Escrivá say repeatedly, is not the holiness of *Opus Dei*. See Múzquiz, "Testimony," 4.

27. See Josemaría Escrivá, "Instruction," December 8, 1941, nos. 5, 36, 80–81, 82, 87–88. Cited in Fuenmayor, et al., *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, 101, note 50. Also, Múzquiz, "Testimony," 59.

28. See Coverdale, *Uncommon Faith*, 348–368.

29. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 29–30.



Fathers José Luis Múzquiz and Blessed Álvaro del Portillo in Rome (1947).

During this time he obtained a doctorate in history with a thesis on one of the Viceroy's of Peru, the Count of Chinchón (1629–1639), during the monarchy of Philip IV.<sup>30</sup>

In June 1944, Múzquiz's priestly ordination took place in Madrid. One of the first three members of *Opus Dei* to receive priestly ordination, Múzquiz helped Escrivá spread *Opus Dei* throughout the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>31</sup> As a priest, at Escrivá's behest, he took on the role of vice-postulator for the canonization cause of Isidoro Zorzano, one of the first members of *Opus Dei*. Zorzano had died with a reputation for sanctity in 1946; his cause for canonization was formally opened in Madrid in 1948.<sup>32</sup>

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30. See José Luis Múzquiz, *El Conde de Chinchón, Virrey del Perú* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Escuela de estudios Hispano Americanos de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1945), 18. During the years 1941–1945 he published fifteen articles on civil engineering in the *Revista de Obras Públicas de Madrid*.

31. The other two ordained in the same ceremony were also engineers: Álvaro del Portillo (St. Josemaría's first successor as head of *Opus Dei* who will be beatified on September 27, 2014) and Jose María Hernández Garnica, whose process of canonization is also underway. See José Carlos Martín de la Hoz, "Información sobre las causas de canonización de algunos fieles del Opus Dei," in *Studia et Documenta: Rivista dell'Istituto Storico san Josemaría Escrivá*, vol. VII (2013), 445–446.

32. See Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 44. And also, De la Hoz, *Información sobre las causas de canonización*, 440–441.

Múzquiz maintained his relationship with the School of Civil Engineers, and was appointed professor of religion. As a professor he wrote several works that examine the synthesis between Christian life, professional work, and social responsibility in light of the spirit of *Opus Dei*.<sup>33</sup> In an article published in 1947, Múzquiz wrote,

The error in the religious formation of Catholics for many generations has been the assumption that religion should remain at the margin of daily life and activity. Instead of imbuing everything with a supernatural meaning, most Catholics have been taught to view religion as limited to the saying of a few short prayers at the beginning and end of the day—and, at most, to some works of charity or benevolence.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, Múzquiz suggested integrating the future engineers' professional training with the study of Sacred Scripture and the Church's social teaching (specifically the social encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* [1891] and *Quadragesimo Anno* [1931]), along with the teachings of Escrivá.

For Múzquiz the work of an engineer, like all honorable work, should be turned into a path for encountering God through the exercise of the virtues—especially justice and charity—striving to carry out one's work with technical competence and human concern. Thus work is viewed as a path to serve others and imbue society with Gospel values.<sup>35</sup> Topics such as a just wage, the social function of capital, relations between workers and management, and profit-sharing with workers, were amply developed in these writings.<sup>36</sup> The key point that Múzquiz learned from Escrivá regarding the sanctification of work, however, was that rather than human success (which according to Max Weber characterized the "Protestant work ethic"), of greater importance was to convert one's work into an encounter with God, and thus to draw out its transforming and sanctifying value for the world.<sup>37</sup>

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33. See José Luis Múzquiz, "Enseñanza religiosa en la Escuela de Caminos," in *Revista de obras públicas de Madrid* 95 (1947): 161–163; *Tres conferencias sobre problemas morales del Ingeniero, Moral profesional*, (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Asociación de Ingenieros de Caminos, Canales y Puertos, 1947), and "Los principios morales de la vida profesional del ingeniero," in *Revista de obras públicas de Madrid* 96 (1948): 318–326.

34. Múzquiz, *Enseñanza religiosa*, 161.

35. "In June of 1942," wrote Múzquiz, "I took some notes during a retreat in which the Father told us: 'The Work proposes to us a path of sanctification through ordinary work, which is what Jesus taught us in the 30 first years of his mortal life.' And he added: 'work is not in order to dominate others, but to serve the Church.' And he reinforced this idea saying: 'we are not interested in positions, but in sanctification.'" Múzquiz, "Testimony," 21.

36. See Múzquiz, *Tres conferencias*, 84 and 92.

37. See Múzquiz, "Testimony," 15, 21 and 22. Occasionally some authors have tried to find in *Opus Dei*'s teaching on work an application of the Calvinist ethic to the Catholic world. See Claire E. Wolfteich, *American Catholics through the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Lay*



*Opus Dei's* growth during the 1940s, in which Múzquiz played a very active role both as layman and priest, was significant. The small group who had survived the war had grown by 1946 to 268 members, men and women.<sup>38</sup> In 1947, *Opus Dei* received its first pontifical approval.<sup>39</sup> Soon after, in 1948, married people began to be admitted to *Opus Dei*. Four years later *Opus Dei* had 2,954 members.<sup>40</sup> With pontifical approval, *Opus Dei* began its international expansion to Portugal, England, France, and Ireland. In 1949 Escrivá decided to expand outside Europe, to the United States and Mexico.<sup>41</sup>

When Múzquiz left to begin the apostolic work in the U.S., besides his almost ten years in *Opus Dei*, he brought with him specific guidelines from Escrivá: seek personal holiness and help others to seek it;<sup>42</sup> be daring and do not be afraid to make mistakes;<sup>43</sup> and become a wholehearted American.<sup>44</sup> After his first eight months in the United States, Múzquiz wrote Escrivá, "I now have my 'First Papers,' which is half way to American citizenship. After five years they will give me the 'Second' ones."<sup>45</sup> A witness of Múzquiz's first years in the U.S. wrote, "Father Joseph adapted to America so well that I never thought of him other than as an American."<sup>46</sup> "He told me," another recalled, "how proud he was of being a citizen of this country, and of having actually voted in the last election."<sup>47</sup> For Múzquiz, becoming an American was not simply personal. He knew he

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*Experience, and Public Life* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001), 48. For a theological consideration of the sanctification of work according to the spirit of *Opus Dei*, see José Luis Illanes, *The Sanctification of Work: Aspects of the Teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei* (New York: Scepter, 2003).

38. See Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. III, 118, note 154.

39. By this approval, *Opus Dei* became the first secular institute in the Church. During the 1950s, St. Josemaría reached the conclusion that this canonical form did not guarantee the secularity of *Opus Dei* and therefore petitioned the Holy See for a canonical configuration in accord with its foundational charism. *Opus Dei* was erected as a personal prelatore in 1982. See Fuenmayor, et al., *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, 285 and ff.

40. See Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. III, 118, note 154.

41. On the beginnings of *Opus Dei* in Mexico, see Victor Cano, "Los primeros pasos del *Opus Dei* en México (1948–1949)," in *Studia et Documenta: Rivista dell'Istituto Storico san Josemaría Escrivá*, vol. I (2007): 41–64 and Pedro Casciaro, *Dream and Your Dreams Will Fall Short* (Princeton, NJ: Scepter, 2008).

42. See Múzquiz, "Testimony," 133.

43. See *Ibid.*, 83.

44. See *Ibid.*

45. Letter, December 21, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491221. In November 1954 he wrote: "I have already passed the 'examination' to become an American citizen. ... In a little over a month I think they will grant me citizenship." Letter, November 7, 1954, AGP, series M.1.1, 541107.

46. Testimony of Edmund Hernandez, San Francisco, July 30, 2006, PO-JMM-T-10003.

47. Testimony of John P. Debicki, April 20, 2007, PO-JMM-T-10105.

had come to the United States with the task of “transplanting” *Opus Dei* there, making it “American,” without allowing it to lose its founding charisma or Catholic identity.<sup>48</sup>

### *Opus Dei’s* Beginnings in the United States

When Múzquiz arrived in the United States in February 1949, he found a prosperous and confident Catholic community.<sup>49</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s the number of Catholics in the country increased from 22 to 42 million. Vocations to the priesthood and the religious life were abundant.<sup>50</sup> Especially striking was the growth of cloistered contemplative orders, including the Trappists.<sup>51</sup> American Catholicism also boasted an active laity who, incorporated into Catholic Action associations, serving as collaborators with the priests and the hierarchy.<sup>52</sup>

The spiritual life of most Catholics was marked by an intense sacramental life, sometimes lived as a multiplication of pious practices in a somewhat formalistic and individualistic way, without solid grounding in Sacred Scripture or much impact on their working or social lives.<sup>53</sup> In this context, some people warned that the Christian life should not be reduced to taking part in church activities or a formalistic devotion, and stressed the need to cultivate a true “interior life.”<sup>54</sup> But the divorce between the active and contemplative life was not completely overcome. In 1956 one author trying to combat

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48. “On beginning the apostolic work in the United States I also recall that the Father told us that we shouldn’t form a ‘cyst,’ and that we had to become part of the country. He advised us always to speak in English among ourselves. But he also warned us that we ‘shouldn’t identify ourselves so closely with our new country that we failed to see its defects; that we had to see them in order to correct them.’ Naturally, doing so with great prudence and delicacy.” Múzquiz, “Testimony,” 83.

49. See James J. Hennessey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 283 and Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 351–352.

50. See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 358.

51. See Eugène Jarry and Gustave Weigel, “États-Unis,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. IV (Paris: Beauchesne, 1961), 1428–1445.

52. For a discussion of Catholic Action in Chicago in the 1950s, see Vincent J. Giese, “The Lay Apostolate in Chicago,” in Louis J. Putz, ed., *The Catholic Church, U.S.A.* (Chicago: Fides Publishers Association, 1956), 358–374.

53. See Joseph P. Chinnici, “The Catholic Community at Prayer, 1926–1976,” in James M. O’Toole, ed., *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 73–79; Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 383 and ff.

54. “Intense action should not be incompatible with the interior life,” one author insisted in 1956. See Jordan Aumann, “Activism and the Interior Life,” in Putz, ed., *The Catholic Church*, 375–393.

activism and foster interior life wrote, “One cannot at the same time strive for contemplation and be committed to the active life.”<sup>55</sup>

In the years just before the Second Vatican Council, American Catholicism gave rise to numerous lay movements that aspired to a deeper spiritual life and a greater consistency between religion and daily life, along with a greater effort to imbue society with Christian principles.<sup>56</sup> Those involved hoped to share more fully in the Church’s mission. Examples of this “lay awakening” before the council include initiatives as diverse as *Commonweal* magazine, Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker movement, the Young Christian Workers; the Christian Family Movement, the Grail, and *Integrity* magazine.<sup>57</sup>

Many of these initiatives drew inspiration from the liturgical and biblical renewal that had begun in Europe and that beginning in the 1920s began to impact the United States,<sup>58</sup> as well as from some Catholic Action initiatives that had their origin overseas.<sup>59</sup> Particularly important for some of these groups was the papal teaching, specifically the encyclicals *Casti Connubii* (1930), in which Pope Pius XI spoke of “the great sanctity of Christian wedlock,” and *Mystici Corporis* (1943), in which Pope Pius XII, while still viewing lay people as “collaborators” with the hierarchy, emphasized their call to holiness.<sup>60</sup> In living out their vocations, Catholics often focused on work and the family.<sup>61</sup>

In this context Múzquiz began his efforts to make *Opus Dei*’s message known, beginning in Chicago, among the principal centers of U.S. Catholi-

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55. Aumann, “Activism and the Interior Life,” 385.

56. See Jarry and Weigel, “*États-Unis*,” 1428–1445.

57. See Claire Wolfteich, *American Catholics through the Twentieth Century*, 23–51.

58. See Chinnici, “The Catholic Community at Prayer,” 41–51; Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 255, 265–266.

59. This was true of Peter Maurin’s influence on the Catholic Worker movement; Jacques van Ginneken’s on the Grail; and Joseph Cardijn’s on the Young Christian Workers and the Christian Family Movement. See Wolfteich, *American Catholics through the Twentieth Century*, 26. On the usefulness of adopting a global perspective when studying the history of American Catholicism, see Peter R. D’Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). More references to globalization in recent historiographical studies of American Catholicism can be found in Federico M. Requena, “El impacto del Concilio Vaticano II en la historiografía sobre el catolicismo en Estados Unidos,” in *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 23 (2014): 279–307.

60. “In particular those members of the laity who collaborate with the ecclesiastical hierarchy in spreading the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer occupy an honorable, if often a lowly, place in the Christian community, and even they under the impulse of God and with His help, can reach the heights of supreme holiness, which, Jesus Christ has promised, will never be wanting to the Church” (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, no.17).

61. See Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 287, 309.

cism.<sup>62</sup> A few days after his arrival, Múzquiz wrote Escrivá: “I think Chicago is the ideal place in all respects to begin our apostolic work. ... The population is one third Catholic and seemingly quite devout; at least this region is where the ‘recruiters’ for the religious orders come.”<sup>63</sup> “The Chicago area alone,” he wrote a few days later, “without including the cities around it, has more university students than all of Spain.”<sup>64</sup>

The first step to introduce *Opus Dei* to Chicago was to visit Cardinal Stritch.<sup>65</sup> The visit likely followed Escrivá’s guidelines for visits to bishops

He told me to tell them that “I had come to greet them, to tell them of the Father’s friendship, of his affection for the hierarchy, and to tell them that the bishops were unanimous in their affection for the Work” ... He added that “before opening a house we will provide days of recollection, Exercises (as retreats were then called in Spain), spiritual direction, etc., without charging even for the trips, and without doing any propaganda.” The Father also told me to ask the bishop if he could introduce us to a priest who could put us in contact with good souls.<sup>66</sup>

Thus Múzquiz was given some clear priorities for his first steps: to make known “without propaganda” the spirit of *Opus Dei*; to attract vocations; to carry out a broad work of spiritual direction and retreats; and to open up a formation center for students as Escrivá had done in Madrid.<sup>67</sup>

## Making *Opus Dei* Known

To make *Opus Dei* known and seek the first U.S. vocations, Múzquiz established contact with a large number of different institutions, including

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62. The initial group of *Opus Dei* members who came to the U.S. also included four laymen. José María Barredo had already spent several years in the U.S. doing research at Columbia University, MIT, and the University of Chicago. The three others who arrived with Múzquiz were Salvador Martínez Ferigle, who had received a scholarship to complete his doctorate in physics at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and Jose Maria Viladas and Antonio Martorel, two young students who had also received scholarships to continue their studies in the United States. Though we are focusing on the efforts of Father Múzquiz, we should not forget that most *Opus Dei* members are lay men and women and that they played an essential role in the beginnings of *Opus Dei* in each country.

63. Letter, March 2, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490302.

64. Letter, March 4, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490304.

65. Letter, March 21, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490321. Múzquiz’s relationships with the American hierarchy is a topic worthy of further study. Here we will simply record his words: “It gives one joy to see how united the hierarchy is to Rome and the Apostolic Delegate, as well as among themselves.” Letter, November 25, 1955, AGP, series M.1.1, 551125.

66. Múzquiz, “Testimony,” 31.

67. “As our Father [St. Josemaría] had done in the residence known (from its address) as Ferraz 50, we thought we had to begin a student residence as soon as possible.” José Luis Múzquiz, “USA—Early History,” January 6, 1978, PO-JMM-E-10037.

Newman clubs, high schools, and even retreat centers. He gave talks to small groups or explained *Opus Dei*'s message to interested individuals. At times he would offer the assistance of his own priestly work or ask other priests to introduce him to people who might be interested.<sup>68</sup>

One of Múzquiz's first concerns was to make clear how *Opus Dei* differed from other Catholic lay associations in general and from Catholic Action apostolates specifically. Múzquiz, who was well acquainted with European Catholic Action, described it as it existed in the U.S.:

In this country "Catholic Action" means the activity of Catholics or the lay apostolate. There is no organized "Catholic Action" such as we have in Europe, and the groups that call themselves Catholic Action are groups with full independence from and sometimes even in conflict with the hierarchy. And in most cases there is a lot of action and little in the way of formation or spiritual life.<sup>69</sup>

Múzquiz had to correct those who believed *Opus Dei* could be amalgamated into Catholic Action. He stressed that *Opus Dei* was a specific vocation.

Within a few weeks of his arrival, Múzquiz was in contact with members of Calvert House (the Newman Club at the University of Chicago), representatives of Marmion Academy (a Benedictine-sponsored military academy for high school students), and the Dominicans at St. Pius V Priory who gave him a list of "good prospects," especially women.<sup>70</sup> The retreat-master at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, Múzquiz reported, "was glad to get to know us, since many people came there who wanted to lead a life of dedication or do apostolate in the world, and didn't know where to turn. ... He is eager to send us vocations."<sup>71</sup>

In September 1949, taking advantage of the National Convention of Newman Clubs held in Chicago, Múzquiz met "a good number of priests and young fellows" who could help spread *Opus Dei* to other locations.<sup>72</sup> He contacted chaplains at Purdue University,<sup>73</sup> Northwestern, Illinois, and the

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68. The first lay members of *Opus Dei* in the U.S. also strove to make its message known among their co-workers and fellow students. See Gueguen, "The Early Days of Opus Dei in Cambridge (U.S.)," 280–282.

69. Letter, March 14, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500314.

70. Letter, March 21, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490321; Letter, March 2, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490302; Letter, April 26, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490426.

71. Letters, April 17, 1949 and April 22, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490417 and 490422.

72. Letter, September 11, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490911.

73. Letter, December 4, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491204.

University of Notre Dame.<sup>74</sup> When visiting New York's Fordham University, a Jesuit told him he was very interested in having his students attend his presentation, since a great need existed for them to hear about "the sanctification of professional work and apostolate in the world."<sup>75</sup>

In his talks about *Opus Dei*, Múzquiz frequently spoke about the engineer Isidoro Zorzano, one of the institution's first members, whose cause of canonization had been opened. He sought to spread devotion to Zorzano through the publication of an informational bulletin and the distribution of prayer cards.<sup>76</sup> He also oversaw the publication of Daniel Sargent's biography titled *God's Engineer*.<sup>77</sup>

Some of Múzquiz's first meetings gave rise to written articles that helped make *Opus Dei* better known. For example, after his visit to Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C., its newspaper published an article entitled: "'Opus Dei,' Jobs Open for Saints."<sup>78</sup> Following the plan he had spoken about with Cardinal Stritch, Múzquiz began giving spiritual direction and days of recollection, an effort he intensified once the student residence was opened.

### Woodlawn: A Center for Human and Christian Formation

As early as May 1949, Múzquiz sought to buy a fifteen-room brick house located at 5544 South Woodlawn Avenue, in the University of Chicago-Hyde Park neighborhood, near St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church. The meager financial resources of Múzquiz and the small group of *Opus Dei* members consisted only in income from their respective scholarships and jobs, enough to live on but not to buy a large house. "Of course,

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74. Letter, December 12, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491212.

75. Letter, December 6, 1951, AGP, series M.1.1, 511206.

76. Letters, March 29, 1949, April 8 and 26, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490329, 490408 and 490426.

77. Daniel Sargent, *God's Engineer* (Chicago: Scepter, 1954). The book was published with a preface by Bishop William P. O'Connor of Madison, Wisconsin. The biography's impact can be seen in the letters of Múzquiz: "*God's Engineer* is doing a lot of good and every day we receive a letter from someone interested in Isidoro or wanting to know more about the Work." Letter, February 27, 1954, AGP, series M.1.1, 540227. "It's making the Work known to many people and bringing vocations of people who can help us to begin in other areas. Last year an engineer from Dayton, Ohio, came by who had read the book and is eager to know more." Letter, May 11, 1954, AGP, series M.1.1, 540511.

78. "'Opus Dei,' Jobs Open, For Saints," in *The Hoya*, XXXI, May 17, 1950. Some years later, Edward J. Snyder wrote in the *Chicago Daily News*, "Religion And Job Linked To *Opus Dei*," Monday, March 9, 1953. And in 1956, Dale Francis, wrote in *Our Sunday Visitor*, "Married Men, Do You Want to Give Yourself to God Where You Are?" This latter article helped to put many in contact with *Opus Dei* since the newspaper had a circulation of more than one million readers. See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 394.



Woodland Residence, Chicago (1949).

we did not have money to buy it, but our optimism was unbroken,” Múzquiz wrote. “We thought of how the first house in Rome was bought and it is already paid for, so we decided to go ahead.”<sup>79</sup> A real estate agent, Tom Crain, was so impressed by Múzquiz’s sincerity, innocence, and acceptance of God’s will, that he offered his own commission for the house’s sale as the down payment.<sup>80</sup>

Although the residence would not open for students until December 1949 and still required extensive repairs, in August, Múzquiz and the four young lay members of *Opus Dei* occupied the home, thus beginning the first U.S. center of *Opus Dei*.<sup>81</sup> Múzquiz always honored the founder’s vision and his experience living alongside him, including Escrivá’s insistence that the centers should be family homes.<sup>82</sup>

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79. Letter, May 11, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490511-2.

80. George Boesen, letter to his grandchildren, January 1, 1999, PO-JMM-D-10014. More details about the house’s purchase and those who helped in its acquisition can be found in Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 52–53.

81. Letter, August 26, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490826.

82. “The Father [St. Josemaría] had a contagiously cheerful character, imbued with good humor. He wanted us to be joyful, and the Centers of the Work to be family homes, and that the homes of the Supernumerary members to be bright and cheerful homes.” Múzquiz, “Testimony,” 8.

The need to furnish the house led Múzquiz to make contact with Mrs. Bramsfield,<sup>83</sup> a woman known for her generosity to the Church. Under her initiative a group of Catholic women formed “The Auxiliary League,” which mobilized itself to obtain everything needed for the residence.<sup>84</sup> Múzquiz was impressed by the generosity and helpfulness of U.S. Catholics.<sup>85</sup> Those principally involved in the house’s renovation were Múzquiz himself, in his role as an engineer, and the other residents, as well as the students who had begun to attend the activities of spiritual formation and who used the house as a place to study.<sup>86</sup>

Múzquiz worked to furnish an oratory (chapel), relying on the generosity of two elderly sisters, Clara and Sophie Daleiden.<sup>87</sup> Recalling Escrivá’s great concern for the installing an oratory in the Madrid residence, he wrote Escrivá: “We already have the altar and Tabernacle in our house and we are finishing work on the oratory. Our Lord will probably be able to stay with us the night of the feast of the Holy Cross.”<sup>88</sup>

Múzquiz strove to foster liturgical life in the residence as he had lived it with the founder. Key elements were the daily Eucharistic celebration; weekly preaching of a meditation, followed by Eucharistic exposition and benediction;<sup>89</sup> and a vigil for the Blessed Sacrament every first Friday. Múzquiz realized that Eucharistic adoration was very familiar to the young Catholics with whom he came in contact.<sup>90</sup> Since the Second World War’s end, adoration had seen a notable flourishing among lay Catholics, particularly among the young.<sup>91</sup>

A novelty for most of them was the meditations that Múzquiz preached following the style of St. Josemaría. Múzquiz’s biographer wrote,

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83. See Múzquiz, “USA—Early History,” PO-JMM-E-10037.

84. Letter, September 25, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490925.

85. Letters, October 19 and 27, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491019 and 491027. From the 1920s on, the rapid growth of parishes and schools had required extensive fund-raising efforts and many Catholics responded with great generosity. See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 382.

86. Letter September 4, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490904.

87. See Múzquiz, “USA-Early History,” PO-JMM-E-10037.

88. Letter, September 11, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490911. “The Father had always told us that, in setting up a Center of the Work, the first concern always had to be the oratory. I recall that this idea was very clear to us and that, in establishing the first center of the Work in the United States, ‘Woodlawn Residence’ in Chicago, the first room that we finished was the oratory.” Múzquiz, “Testimony,” 27.

89. Letter, October 27, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491027.

90. See Múzquiz, “USA-Early History,” PO-JMM-E-10037.

91. In 1948 Catholic Youth Adoration (CYA) had been founded. In 1952, 75,000 young people took part in holy hours during the 1951–1952 school year with fifty-nine groups



[Escrivá's] meditations usually lasted half an hour. He would read a few short passages of the Gospel and comment on them in an intimate personal way, talking out loud with Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament about his life and about the consequences for Escrivá himself and his hearers of the Gospel passages he had read. In the meditations, Escrivá was not delivering a sermon as an exercise in rhetoric but voicing out loud his own personal conversation with Christ, his personal prayer, as a way of helping the listeners to pray.<sup>92</sup>

The young Americans to which Múzquiz preached noted the unique qualities of his preaching. One related,

His meditations had a uniquely simple and persistent style, a combination of childlikeness and seriousness that was especially effective with young people. He clearly stated the theme, insisted upon it by rephrasing it in different contexts, and illustrated it with practical examples. He chose words and gestures that left the impression that the point being developed was most urgent for our interior life and apostolate, and this led easily to specific small resolutions.<sup>93</sup>

Another recalled, "I was present for a number of meditations he preached. They were very simple and straightforward; there were no embellishments or rhetorical frills."<sup>94</sup> "I remember that meditation's impact on my life," recorded a third.<sup>95</sup>

Laymen soon began providing spiritual formation in the residence,<sup>96</sup> following the model Múzquiz had learned from St. Josemaría in the 1930s.<sup>97</sup> Catechism classes were organized along with visits to assist needy people in the neighborhood.<sup>98</sup> The young people who came to Woodlawn, the name the residence soon came to be called, found it a place where they could dedicate many hours to study. Thus the importance of sanctifying one's work was given a practical application. Over time, and during the summers,

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in the country. See Margaret McGuinness, "Let Us Go to the Altar: American Catholics and the Eucharist, 1926–1976," in O'Toole, ed., *Habits of Devotion*, 217, 219.

92. For further information on Escrivá's "meditations," see Coverdale, *Uncommon Faith*, 139–142.

93. Testimony of John A. Gueguen, October 14, 2004, PO-JMM-T-314.

94. Testimony of Bradley Arturi, July 26, 2006, PO-JMM-T-10002.

95. Testimony of Diana M. de Guzmán de Castro, May 21, 2007, PO-JMM-T-10092.

96. Letter, June 15, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500615.

97. Letter, October 27, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491027.

98. "We are thinking of organizing a Catechism class, probably in one of the parishes where there are poor Mexicans." Letter, February 4, 1952, AGP, series M.1.1, 520204-01. "A few weeks ago we began a small catechism class for some high school students in a poor black neighborhood. And for Christmas we are going to distribute toys—which the students themselves will bring or collect among their friends—in another poor black neighborhood." Letter, December 3, 1953, AGP, series M.1.1, 531203.

courses on various academic subjects began to be organized, including mathematics, biology, and philosophy.<sup>99</sup>

In 1952, Múzquiz oversaw the opening of a second residence for students in Chicago: the Kenwood residence. The women of *Opus Dei*, many of whom had arrived in the United States from Spain in May 1950, ran the center.<sup>100</sup> Múzquiz soon came to the conclusion that the model of a residence for a large number of students, which was proving quite fruitful in Spain at that time, was not well suited for the university population of Chicago. “It seems much more suitable,” he wrote Escrivá, “to concentrate on retreats and days of recollection rather than residences, at least for quite some time. ... When there are a lot of vocations from this country, we could have residences, but always with a smaller number of students.”<sup>101</sup> Most students who took part in the residence’s formative activities did not live there. The residences acted as meeting place, enabling Múzquiz to intensify his work of giving spiritual direction, days of recollection, and retreats.

### Spiritual Direction and Retreats

In November 1950 Múzquiz wrote, “I was with some priests who know a lot of people (one of them even gives spiritual direction, something very rare here) who are interested in the Work.”<sup>102</sup> Múzquiz was convinced that spiritual direction, such as he had experienced it with St. Josemaría, was an indispensable help. Hence he dedicated a lot of effort to it, both for young people and adults. In offering that spiritual accompaniment, he gave special importance to teaching people to pray.<sup>103</sup> “The spiritual life is practically new to them,” wrote Múzquiz, “but it brings a lot of joy to be sowing it.”<sup>104</sup>

Múzquiz’s letters include many comments on the spiritual lives of U.S. Catholics, stemming from his experience as a spiritual director. “This country is marvelous and has people with many human virtues.”<sup>105</sup> “One has to struggle against a great lack of formation: all my fellow priests set as the high-

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99. Letter, April 20, 1953, AGP, series M.1.1, 530420.

100. Letter, May 3, 1952, AGP, series M.1.1, 520503.

101. Letter, March 21, 1954, AGP, series M.1.1, 540321.

102. Letter, November 1, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 501101. Father Mann, C.Ss.R., had told him a few months earlier: “He says that the problem is that there is no spiritual direction here, not even among the priests or the sisters.” Letter, June 15, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500615-2.

103. In 1935, St. Josemaría wrote: “Prayer. A lot on this topic, because, if you don’t make the boys men of prayer, you have wasted your time.” Escrivá, *Instruction*, 9-I-1935, no. 133, quoted in Escrivá, *The Way: A Critical-Historical Edition prepared by Pedro Rodriguez* (New York: Scepter, 2009), commentary on no. 961.

104. Letter, October 27, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 491027.

105. Letter, May 22, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490522.

est ideal that of marrying a Catholic.”<sup>106</sup> “People here ‘devour’ the saints.”<sup>107</sup> “When one speaks to them of perfection, of holiness, people are moved.”<sup>108</sup> As with his preaching, Múzquiz left a deep mark with his work of spiritual direction: “He was a great ‘listener’ and also a great ‘understander,’” recalled one of the many who benefited from this effort.<sup>109</sup>

Múzquiz made great use of St. Josemaría’s writings in his spiritual direction. He especially used *The Way* and *Holy Rosary*, in provisional translations, while attempting to get them published in English.<sup>110</sup> In 1952, they were already in the project’s final phase: “People here have a great devotion to the ‘family Rosary,’ so it could be a great success (more so, I think, than *The Way* here, since not many people are prepared for it yet) and many thousands could be distributed.”<sup>111</sup>

During the 1950s, Marian devotion reached its peak in the United States.<sup>112</sup> From 1948 to 1957, 10,000 Marian titles were published.<sup>113</sup> A print run of 6,000 copies was made of the first edition of Escrivá’s *Holy Rosary*, which was translated with the help of the Spanish specialist, John Phillip Netherton, from the University of Chicago.<sup>114</sup> *The Way* was published in English translation in 1954 with a prologue by Cardinal Stritch.<sup>115</sup> Echoes of its impact soon began to appear in Múzquiz’s letters. “Thomas Merton wrote me enthusiastically about *The Way*. ‘I appreciate its genuine and direct power. It will certainly do a great deal of good by its simplicity, which is a true medium for the Gospel message. I beg God to bless *Opus Dei*, and ask the favor of your prayers,’ he says.”<sup>116</sup> “*The Way* is very well liked,” Múzquiz wrote in another letter. “A seminary in Indiana asked me for 100 copies, because Bishop James Navagh (auxiliary bishop of Raleigh, North Carolina) is going to give them a retreat and enthusiastically recommended the book.”<sup>117</sup>

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106. Ibid.

107. Letter, May 10, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500510.

108. Letter, March 28, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490328.

109. Testimony of Cormac Burke, PO-JMM-T-10025, p. 8, and Bernardo M. Villegas, April 2007, PO-JMM-T-10107, p. 2.

110. Letter, March 21, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490321.

111. Letter, February 16, 1952, AGP, series M.1.1, 520216-01.

112. See Paula M. Kane, “Marian Devotions since 1940: Continuity or Casualty?” in O’Toole, ed., *Habits of Devotion*, 89–130.

113. See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 385.

114. Josemaría Escrivá, *Holy Rosary* (Chicago: Scepter, 1953); Letter, March 29, 1953, AGP, JMM A-10045-530329; Múzquiz, “Testimony,” 65. This publication was the origin of Scepter Publishers, which would also publish Escrivá’s *The Way*.

115. Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* (Chicago: Scepter, 1954).

116. Letter, January 25, 1955, AGP, series M.1.1, 550125-01.

117. Letter, January 25, 1955, AGP, series M.1.1, 550125-02.



Father José Luis Múzquiz with Saint Josemaría Escrivá on his left, Rome (1951).

The two Chicago residences offered Múzquiz new possibilities for preaching retreats, for both men and women. In March 1950 he wrote Escrivá, “Certainly giving retreats is one of the things that is going to have the most success once we get things properly organized.”<sup>118</sup> Múzquiz had before his eyes the important development that the retreat movement was experiencing in the United States. Together with the liturgy and novenas, it had become one of the characteristic elements of American Catholicism in those years.<sup>119</sup> Especially popular were the high school retreats, often similar to a parish mission, since they concentrated heavily on topics connected with sin, judgment, heaven, and hell.<sup>120</sup>

Múzquiz followed the style and content of the retreats according to Escrivá’s model. Some in Spain, accustomed to a dramatic style of preaching that placed a large emphasis on death, judgment and hell, were surprised by Father Josemaría’s style and criticized him.<sup>121</sup> Like St. Josemaría, Múzquiz

118. Letter, March 23, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500323. Múzquiz had begun preaching retreats in places other than the two residences. Referring to a retreat he gave in Milwaukee he wrote, “I gave a three day retreat in a retreat center of the ‘Pallottine Fathers.’ There were about 20 people.” Letter, June 15, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500615-2.

119. See Jarry and Weigel, “*États-Unis*,” 1444. By 1930 there were fifty-five retreat centers in the U.S., with more than 3,000 retreats for men each year. See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 387.

120. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 387.

121. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. II, 471–475.

did speak about sin, judgment, heaven and hell, but without making them the center of his preaching, which was focused on Christ. He emphasized topics such as divine filiation, seeking holiness in daily life, the possibility of being “contemplatives in the middle of the world,” commitment to the world and society through work understood as service, and the laity’s responsibility in the Church’s apostolic mission.

The retreats were held on weekends for groups of ten or fifteen students in both residences. The first was for students from St. Mel’s Parish High School, in 1952, and soon students from over ten different high schools were attending the retreats.<sup>122</sup> The impact of these retreats can be seen in one recollection: “Unlike my previous retreats, when this one ended, I was eager to start living what it had been about. In place of the subtle pessimism of previous retreats, here was a new optimism and confidence.”<sup>123</sup> The same activities were carried out in the women’s residence for girls from high schools in Chicago and the surrounding area.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, Múzquiz preached retreats for university students and professionals.<sup>125</sup>

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After two years in the United States, the program that Múzquiz had presented to Chicago’s Cardinal Stritch, in 1949, was well underway. Those first contacts and his work of spiritual direction and retreats led to the first vocations to *Opus Dei*. A Redemptorist priest whom Múzquiz had met at the University of Notre Dame, Father Mann, put him in contact with Dick Rieman, a twenty-four year-old from Chicago and former Navy aviator, who wanted to make a retreat.<sup>126</sup> Some months later, on July 15, 1950, Rieman asked to be admitted as a numerary (with a commitment to celibacy) in *Opus*

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122. Boys’ high schools that attended *Opus Dei* retreats included: St. George, St. Patrick, De la Salle (Christian Brothers), St. Leo (Christian Brothers of Ireland), St. Michael (Marianists), Holy Trinity (Brothers of the Holy Cross), Mount Carmel (Carmelites), and possibly St. Rita, Mendel (Augustinians), and Fenwick (Dominicans). Letters of May 3, 1952 and November 26, 1952, AGP, series M.1.1, 520503 and 521126.

123. Recollection of Carl B. Schmitt. cited in Gueguen, “The Early Days of Opus Dei in Boston,” 100.

124. “The girls have come from Alvernia, the Academy of Our Lady, St Patrick, Nazareth, Notre Dame, Maria High School, St. Barbara, and Immaculata. And groups are now being prepared for retreats after the vacations in Good Counsel, St. Michael, St. Benedict, St. Gregory, Cardinal Stritch High School, Trinity, St. Thomas, St. Mary, Mercy, and probably in a few others.” Letter, November 26, 1952, AGP, series M.1.1, 521126. In 1955, he continued giving these retreats. Letter, August 23, 1955, AGP, series M.1.1, 550823.

125. Some of those attending these retreats came from “Student Councils, Sodalities, Religious Councils, Catholic Action, the Legion of Mary, etc.” Letter of November 26, 1952, AGP, series M.1.1, 521126-01.

126. Letter, June 15, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500615-2.

*Dei*.<sup>127</sup> The first woman to join as a numerary was Pat Lind, a Chicagoan, in June 1951.<sup>128</sup>

From the start, Múzquiz had spoken about *Opus Dei* to married persons.<sup>129</sup> The first vocations of married men and women came in 1953.<sup>130</sup> Pius XII's approval of *Opus Dei*'s constitutions in 1950 made possible the inscription of non-Catholics and non-Christians as "cooperators" of *Opus Dei*.<sup>131</sup> The foundations were now set for its growth and geographical expansion.

In 1961 Múzquiz moved to Rome to assist Escrivá as a member of the *Opus Dei* general council. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council's opening, *Opus Dei* counted several hundred U.S. members, men and women, laity and priests, married and celibate, from a variety of social strata.<sup>132</sup> As the number of members grew, their doctrinal, theological, and spiritual formation became Múzquiz's priority. Beginning in 1954, several dozen U.S. men and women agreed to spend several years in Rome to receive intense formation from Escrivá. Soon the first Americans would be ordained priests of *Opus Dei*. By 1961, about a dozen priests of *Opus Dei* worked in the United States. Centers had been started in cities with important universities such as Boston (1954),<sup>133</sup> Madison (1955),<sup>134</sup> Milwaukee, St. Louis, Washington,

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127. Letter, July 21, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500721. He had grown up in a Catholic family and had attended St. Ambrose School and Mount Carmel High School, both in Chicago.

128. Letter, June 18, 1951, AGP, series M.1.1, 510618.

129. Múzquiz's letters indicate numerous contacts with professionals from all walks of life. He explained *Opus Dei* to them and often asked for financial assistance in starting the student residence. For example, referring to a Mr. Clarke, he wrote: "He called me one day on the telephone and said: 'I've been working for you. I spoke to a friend and he gave me \$100. Come by my office. Would you mind talking to a group of men about work?'" Letter, May 11, 1949 and December 12, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490511-1 and 491212. Múzquiz spread *Opus Dei* also among diocesan priests: "This work with priests could be very effective." See Letters, September 11, 1949 and December 4, 1949, AGP, series M.1.1, 490911 and 491204. "Recently a number of diocesan priests have expressed interest in *Opus Dei*, and we think we should begin this work as soon as possible. The most interesting one is Father [Leo] Trese from Detroit, who is a well known author [of *The Faith Explained*]." Letter, April 20, 1956, AGP, series M.1.1, 560420.

130. Letters, July 10 and July 19, 1953, AGP, series M.1.1, 530610 and 530719.

131. See Fuenmayor, et al., *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, 239. The definitive approval of *Opus Dei* in 1950 had the support of five U.S. bishops: Stritch of Chicago, and one of his auxiliary bishops, as well as Bishop William P. O'Connor of Madison, Wisconsin, and Bishop John G. Bennett of Lafayette, Indiana. See José Luis Múzquiz, Handwritten notes on history of *Opus Dei* in the U.S., PO-JMM-A-10138.1. "Some bishops to whom I explained the Work said that it is the real Catholic Action that the Church needs." Letter, March 14, 1950, AGP, series M.1.1, 500314.

132. Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 57–98.

133. Boston's Cardinal Richard J. Cushing, who had supported Múzquiz's effort from their first meeting, inaugurated the residence. Múzquiz recalled, "He said that I had a green light to speak to people about 'everything furthering the sanctification of the laity,' since 'many



**Father José Luis Múzquiz with his friend, Bishop John Wright, then bishop of Worcester, Massachusetts (later archbishop of Pittsburgh and prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy), at Woodland Residence, Chicago (1954).**

D.C. (1956),<sup>135</sup> and New York (1961),<sup>136</sup> and activities of spiritual formation were underway elsewhere. In 1956, summer courses began to be organized, both for celibate and married members, to intensify their formation. A “Center of Studies” for the younger members became a reality in 1959.<sup>137</sup> Múzquiz returned to the United States in 1976, where he remained until his death in 1981, but this stage of his apostolic work lies outside the scope of this article.

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are eager to hear about this.’ Múzquiz also had frequent contact with the future Cardinal John J. Wright, then secretary of Cardinal Cushing, soon to become an auxiliary bishop of Boston. Letter, January 7, 1951, AGP, series M.1.1, 510107. See also, “The Early Days of Opus Dei in Boston,” 98–111.

134. Bishop O’Connor of Madison, Wisconsin, a good friend of Múzquiz, inaugurated the center. “Years far more than these white hairs of mine will see the fruits of the blessing *Opus Dei* has brought to Madison,” he said during the ceremony. Letter, November 12, 1955, AGP, series M.1.1, 551112. References to O’Connor are frequent in his letters. See, for example, his letters of November 16, 1956 and August 14, 1957, AGP, series M.1.1, 561116 and 570814.

135. The bishops of Milwaukee, Moses Elias Kiley and Albert Gregory Meyer; Joseph E. Ritter, of St. Louis; and Patrick O’Boyle, of Washington, D.C., helped inaugurate these centers. See Letters, February 21 and October 30, 1956, and February 18, 1957, AGP, series M.1.1, 560221, 561030, and 570218.

136. See Letter, March 3, 1961, AGP, series M.1.1, 610303.

137. Coverdale, *Putting Down Roots*, 87.

## Conclusion

The contribution of the Servant of God José Luis Múzquiz to American Catholicism was to begin and consolidate *Opus Dei* in the United States. Múzquiz was successful due to his deep personal identification, first as a layman and later as a priest, with *Opus Dei*'s spirit and apostolic methods gained during his years of close contact with St. Josemaría Escrivá in the 1930s and 1940s in Spain. When he arrived in the U.S., he strove to harmonize fidelity to the original charisma with the movement for Americanization.

During the decade prior to the Second Vatican Council, Múzquiz promoted the universal call to holiness of all the baptized, insisting that holiness was possible in the ordinary circumstances of daily life and work. This message, welcomed by lay people and clergy, helped to begin overcoming the divorce between action and contemplation. Múzquiz's role, however, cannot be reduced to the spread of a single message. Rather he strove to develop an institution, *Opus Dei*. Part of this effort involved fostering an intense sacramental, liturgical, and Scriptural life, complemented by traditional means of spiritual formation, including retreats, meditations, classes of Christian formation, and spiritual direction. The spiritual and pastoral reality that Múzquiz strove to solidify in the United States during the 1950s, while radically different from the religious life, was quite distinct from the then existing Catholic Action and lay associations, with which Múzquiz did not try to establish close contacts.

The message and institution of *Opus Dei* in the U.S. shared some similarities with the "lay awakening" that took place back in the 1950s, emphasizing the Christian meaning of work and family and giving great importance to the cultivation of a true interior life, to the liturgy, and Sacred Scripture. It held up as a model early Christianity and was marked by a strong ecumenical concern. At the same time, it presented certain features of discontinuity with these groups, as they existed in the pre-conciliar years. These lay groups tended to have a specific focus, such as work, family, culture, or ecumenism. *Opus Dei*, although deeply interested in these concerns, aimed to foster Christian holiness in the midst of the world and offer the specific means to attain it. Holiness, Múzquiz insisted, was a Christian life of "total self-giving"—of evangelical radicalness—which up to that time, at least in practice, was usually presented as possible only for the state of perfection of the vowed religious.

Although the present study has focused on the pre-conciliar context, two final considerations can help link this era with the period after the council, and possibly offer avenues for future study. A characteristic feature of the



message and institution Múzquiz strove to spread on American soil—in continuity with St. Josemaría’s preaching—was the absence of the dichotomies often found in the historical studies of the transition between pre- and post-conciliar Catholicism: devotion *versus* the liturgical movement; sacramentality *versus* action in the world; the devotional life *versus* the sanctification of society; spirituality *versus* the institution; the personal dimension *versus* the communitarian dimension; laity *versus* clergy. *Opus Dei*’s message, in contrast, seemed to offer a synthesis.

Only after the Second Vatican Council did *Opus Dei* find an adequate canonical and institutional framework as a personal prelature. The council highlighted concerns central to *Opus Dei*’s spiritual message, including the universal call to holiness, the value of all earthly realities, and the vocational character of every Christian state in life. These themes—central to Vatican II—are critical for understanding Father José Luis Múzquiz’s work in the United States.