

# The Early Days of Opus Dei in Cambridge (U.S.) As Recalled by the First Generation (1956-1961)

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**Abstract:** *This documentary account is a sequel to “The Early Days of Opus Dei in Boston... (1946-1956)”, which appeared in Vol. 1 (2007), 65-112. It tells of a series of apartments across the Charles River in Cambridge that preceded the opening of Elmbrook, and the apostolate conducted mainly with students and professors at Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). Recollections of persons who took part in this history (1956-1961) are supplemented by material in the General Archive of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei.*

**Keywords:** *Josemaría Escrivá – Opus Dei – Harvard University – Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Ambassador Hotel – Elmbrook – 1956-1961*

**Abstract:** *Questo articolo è il seguito di “The Early Days of Opus Dei in Boston... (1946-1956)”, che è apparso nel vol. 1 (2007), 65-112. Tratta dei centri che hanno preceduto l’apertura di Elmbrook, a Cambridge, e dell’apostolato svolto principalmente con studenti e professori ad Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). Le testimonianze delle persone che sono stati i personaggi di questa storia (1956-1961) sono integrati da materiale presente nell’Archivio Generale della Prelatura della Santa Croce e Opus Dei.*

**Keywords:** *Josemaría Escrivá – Opus Dei – Harvard University – Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Ambassador Hotel – Elmbrook – 1956-1961*

Opus Dei's apostolate with students and professional men, based at Trimount House in Boston since it opened in October 1954, acquired a more visible presence across the Charles River in Cambridge in January 1956, when a small apartment was rented on the second floor of the Ambassador, a residential hotel a few minutes' walk from the Harvard campus and a short subway ride from M.I.T. In spring 1956 it facilitated the growth of Opus Dei following upon the first steps of its apostolate in metropolitan Boston<sup>1</sup>. Four of these apartments preceded the opening of Elmbrook. This article treats the apostolate there between 1959 and 1961. Stories of new members are given emphasis in this account because Opus Dei was experiencing its first growth in the United States<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> John Arthur GUEGUEN, *The Early Days of Opus Dei in Boston. As Recalled by the First Generation*, «Studia et Documenta» 1 (2007), pp. 65-112, esp. 98-105. Dr. John C. Coverdale, assisted in preparing both articles. The author wishes to correct an error in the previous article: The fourth sentence in footnote 23 (p. 75) should read, "Not long thereafter, he became the first Mexican-American member of Opus Dei and went to Madrid to study philosophy and theology", because the assertion: "Not long after converting to Catholicism (he had been an atheist), he became the first..." is wrong.

<sup>2</sup> For the methodology of this study, see the opening pages of GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*. The contributors of personal recollections on which this article is based are the following:

- FA Rev. Fernando Acaso, Vitoria, Spain
- JA Dr. Joseph G. A. Atkinson, Toronto, Ont.
- RB Msgr. Robert Bucciarelli, Dublin, Ireland
- GC Rev. George Crafts, Boston, Mass.
- PD Rev. Paul A. Donlan, Los Angeles, Calif.
- JE Dr. Jesus Estanislao, Manila, Philippines
- JF Rev. John Flader, Sydney, Australia
- RF Mr. Enrico Fortunato, New York, N.Y.
- JG Dr. John A. Gueguen, Jr., St. Louis, Mo.
- GH Msgr. Gregory V. Haddock, Toronto, Ont.
- HH Dr. Henry Helmken, Delray Beach, Fla.
- PK Rev. Paul Kais, Houston, Tex.
- JL Dr. John G. Layter, Oak Park, Ill.
- HM Mr. Henry Hardinge Menzies, New Rochelle, N.Y.
- JM Rev. Joseph L. Múzquiz, deceased
- GR Msgr. George M. Rossman, Sydney, Australia
- CS Dr. Carl B. Schmitt, Jr. Washington, D.C.
- HS Dr. Henry J. P. Smith, Boston, Mass.
- WS Msgr. William H. Stetson, Houston, Tex.
- BV Dr. Bernardo M. Villegas, Manila, Philippines
- RY Rev. Robert L. Yoest, Lagos, Nigeria

## 1956-1957 ACADEMIC YEAR: A SECOND AMBASSADOR HOTEL APARTMENT

### *Classes in Christian Formation*

When the academic year began in September 1956, Opus Dei's formational activities took place in a slightly larger apartment in the Ambassador Hotel. Students came each evening to study, took a short break for prayer and friendly conversation, and then returned to their books. Many nights Fr. William (Bill) Porras, a priest of Opus Dei whom Boston Archbishop Richard Cushing had appointed chaplain of the Harvard Catholic Club in 1954, came from Trimount House to make personal spiritual direction available for those who wanted it<sup>3</sup>.

A further development of these apostolic activities occurred that fall when weekly classes or study circles were introduced to offer practical formation in Christian life as St. Josemaría had done in the 1930s when he began to give them to students and young workers in Madrid. These study circles were different from the late-night discussions college students often engage in. They were brief and to the point, aimed at application of virtues and practices of traditional Christian piety. The intention was to help young men develop an interior life of prayer and sacrifice, not only in church but also in their studies and normal daily life<sup>4</sup>.

George Rossman, a junior living in Lowell House on the Harvard campus, directed these first study circles in Cambridge. That so recent a member of Opus Dei could be giving them reflected in part the circumstances of an enterprise just getting started and short on seasoned members. But it also reflected the Founder's sense that those who come to form part of the Work should begin passing on to others what they themselves have received<sup>5</sup>.

In late November 1956, a recently ordained priest arrived to reinforce the apostolate in Boston and Cambridge—Ignatius Segarra<sup>6</sup>, who adopted

<sup>3</sup> Along with several laymen, Fr. Porras had initiated the organized apostolate of Opus Dei in Boston, as recounted in GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 65-112; his appointment as chaplain is related on pp. 83-85.

<sup>4</sup> The origin of these study circles is explained in John F. COVERDALE, *Uncommon Faith: The Early Years of Opus Dei (1928-1943)*, Princeton-New York, Scepter, 2002, pp. 138-139.

<sup>5</sup> Outlines for the talks had been prepared by older members the previous summer at Woodlawn Residence in Chicago. For Msgr. Rossman's initial steps in Opus Dei, see GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 94-108.

<sup>6</sup> Ignasi Segarra Bañeres was born in Albesa, Lérida in 1929. He met Opus Dei during his

the name Fr. Nick. At his first Mass in the United States, he “reminded the Virgin that we are ready for everything, with her constant help, knowing that she will always open to us new fields among the activities of these people”. The morning after his arrival, he took part in an excursion to Wynnview, a small farmhouse near Randolph, Vermont. On the way, “we passed through Cambridge, one of the great fields of the work with young people”<sup>7</sup>. Taking stock of these promising circumstances for Opus Dei in metropolitan Boston, law student Bill Stetson made the simple observation: “It was an exciting time”<sup>8</sup>.

### *Spring retreats, 1957*

The following February, a number of students attended a Harvard Catholic Club retreat given by Fr. Porrás, the chaplain. One of them, Dennis Helming, a freshman from North Dakota, had met Opus Dei the previous semester; he had asked for admission in late January<sup>9</sup>.

Another retreatant was Paul Donlan, a sophomore and member of Harvard’s lightweight crew. Donlan had first heard of Opus Dei from his Adams House roommate, John Costonis, but it made no impression: “In the spring of freshman year John asked me one day if I had heard of Opus Dei. I said ‘no’ and asked what it was. ‘It’s a group of Catholic intellectuals...’, he began. I looked at him squarely: ‘Well, I have absolutely no desire to get involved with “Catholic intellectuals” here or anywhere!’”<sup>10</sup>.

student days in Barcelona, departed for Rome soon after, and eventually earned a doctorate in theology. Cfr. *Romana. Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei*, 19 (2003), p. 166. His arrival in the U.S. marked the beginning of a lifelong “love affair” with America and her people. On his return to Barcelona, he served for many years as pastor of Our Lady of Montalegre and professor of professional ethics at the University of Navarre’s School of Business (IESE). He published several works on catechesis and the spiritual life. A rapidly advancing cancer took his life at age 74 in 2003. Young Americans found Fr. Segarra an engaging man who would draw close, a big smile on his face and bright eyes of welcome and interest. He was ever optimistic, confident, and cheerful. His meditations and classes were fresh, personable, and emphatic. He corresponded with many friends in the U.S. and escorted their visits to Spain (see JG and PK).

<sup>7</sup> *Crónica*, junio 1957, pp. 61-63 (General Archive of the Prelature of Opus Dei, hereafter AGP), P01. See GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, for the background on Wynnview.

<sup>8</sup> WS. His story is told in GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>9</sup> For Helming’s introduction to Opus Dei see GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 109-111.

<sup>10</sup> PD.

The retreat, however, did make an impression. The following day, Donlan went to the Catholic Club chaplain's office:

After telling Fr. Bill about the impact the retreat had made on my soul and the stirrings it caused about a possible vocation of total dedication to God, I asked him quite abruptly to tell me about Opus Dei. Instead of doing that, he asked whether I had been to the apartment. I hadn't, but I said I wanted to. He picked up the phone, called a student who happened to be there, and asked him to meet me. I walked over and met George Rossman, who showed me the apartment and invited me to the circle that evening. I returned every night that week. On Saturday, I accompanied the others to Trimount for Fr. Bill's meditation and Benediction. That visit made a strong impact on me, and the following week, on February 22, I asked for admission during a study session at the apartment<sup>11</sup>.

Helming and Donlan went to Washington, D.C. with Carl Schmitt, Mike Curtin, and John Debicki to spend the spring break on retreat at Baltimore Lodge, a new Opus Dei center in suburban Silver Spring, Maryland. All had recently asked for admission to Opus Dei. Fr. Cormac Burke conducted the retreat, and Fr. Joseph Múzquiz came from Chicago to speak with several of the students. Donlan had already met Fr. Múzquiz when he gave a meditation and celebrated Mass in the Cambridge apartment. Donlan and Helming were asked whether they might like to enter the Roman College of the Holy Cross in Rome<sup>12</sup>.

A retreat for Latin American students took place in Holy Week of 1957 when the chaplain of M.I.T.'s Newman Club, Paulist Fr. Edward Nugent, arranged for Fr. Segarra to conduct it in Spanish. Thereafter, he returned each week to meet with students in the M.I.T. chapel. "No one came the first Thursday, but I was happy to be there waiting". Soon students began arriv-

<sup>11</sup> PD. Such a rapid succession of events seemed natural at that time because the topic of one's divine calling had been implanted from an early age in the minds of young Catholics, and a solid life of piety inculcated in their homes and parishes. The Saturday meditation (priest-directed prayer) and Eucharistic Benediction is a principal formational activity each week in student residences of Opus Dei.

<sup>12</sup> The stories of Schmitt, Curtin, and Debicki, and background on Fr. Burke and Fr. Múzquiz, are related in GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*. Baltimore Lodge, Opus Dei's first center in Washington, had opened two months earlier. At that time the Roman College of the Holy Cross was temporarily located in Villa Tevere, the home of Opus Dei's Founder and central government. It had opened in 1948 to give spiritual, doctrinal, and academic formation to students from countries where the apostolate was beginning.

ing; word spread, and there were more each week. “By now, sometimes a line forms; I’m happy when I leave that chapel”<sup>13</sup>.

### *Close of the School Year*

David Sperling, a graduate student who had been frequenting the apartment and a recent convert to the Catholic faith, asked for admission to Opus Dei in April. While an undergraduate at Yale University, he had participated in heavyweight crew and was now preparing for the Henley Regatta in England that summer. “At first, David wanted to wait until his return. But since he was getting his masters in June, had landed a job at the State Department and would be moving to Washington, it seemed better to begin now so he could see the Work in England and get a jump on his formation”<sup>14</sup>.

Greg Haddock, a recent graduate of Iona College, was working at his first job in New York City when he learned of Opus Dei—from Msgr. James Cassidy, pastor of St. Barnabas Parish in the Bronx, Haddock’s birthplace. One evening in May, the pastor introduced him to Don Coyne, a parishioner who was home on leave from the Navy. Coyne was familiar with Opus Dei’s apostolate at Trimount House in Boston, and suggested that Haddock investigate it some weekend. He did so at the end of May<sup>15</sup>.

Upon arrival at Trimount with a traveling companion, Haddock met Mike Curtin and briefly chatted with Carl Schmitt before going to bed; next morning, Fr. Segarra celebrated Mass, Haddock and his friend went off to see a little of Boston, and returned for lunch and a chat with the priest. “After some time in the oratory and a second session with Fr. Nick, he escorted me to the director’s room and told Carl I was ready to put my request for admission in the form of a personal letter to the Father”<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Obras*, junio 1957, pp. 67-76 (AGP, P03). Fr. Segarra is pictured with 13 students outside the retreat house.

<sup>14</sup> CS. Sperling’s initial contact with Opus Dei is in GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, p. 109. The question of vocation is a natural progression in the lives of many recent converts.

<sup>15</sup> “Msgr. Cassidy was an enthusiastic supporter of the apostolate; Cormac Burke had introduced him to the Work, and he usually attended the retreats for priests” (CS).

<sup>16</sup> GH. Again, as in the other cases of older, more experienced persons, the vocational question had long been the subject of prayer and spiritual direction. Haddock returned to Boston the next three weekends for formational talks and family life. During a vacation period, he was asked if he could drive two Spanish priests to Montréal where they were to begin the apostolate of Opus Dei in Canada (Juan Manuel Martín and Ricardo Gutiérrez). For several days Haddock helped them make contacts and acquire furniture for the first center (Piedmont) at 5643 rue Plantagenet. Returning to his job in New York, he got in

An English translation of St. Josemaría's meditations—*Holy Rosary*<sup>17</sup>—came out in time for the pilgrimages to shrines of Our Lady during the month of May, a custom Opus Dei's Founder had initiated in 1935. In June Mike Curtin received his B.S. (physics), David Sperling his M.A. (Middle Eastern Studies), and Bill Stetson his law degree at the historic commencement when the first woman, a Catholic as well, addressed Harvard graduates—Barbara Ward, Lady Jackson. A week later, Fr. Múzquiz accompanied Schmitt, Curtin, Rossman, Helming, and Donlan to Woodlawn Residence in Chicago—a 24-hour, thousand-mile auto trip—to join other young members of Opus Dei for summer jobs and evening philosophy classes, the introductory phase of prescribed studies the members of Opus Dei carry out in scholastic philosophy and theology.

#### 1957-1958: MOUNT AUBURN STREET

##### *A New Location*

In the fall of 1957, the apostolate in Cambridge diminished temporarily because of several departures. John Debicki transferred to Washington University in St. Louis to help with the apostolate at the new center there (Wespine House), and Sperling moved to Baltimore Lodge<sup>18</sup>. Curtin, Stetson, Helming, and Donlan left for Rome where several other young Americans were pursuing studies and receiving formation at the Roman College of the Holy Cross<sup>19</sup>. In November a new priest arrived from Spain, Fernando Acaso

touch with Manolo Barturen, who was making the first apostolic contacts there. Haddock began occasional weekend trips to Washington to assist with the apostolate at Baltimore Lodge, and moved there in November 1957. He returned to Boston in fall 1960 and went to Rome the following year. Approximately thirty years after these events, Msgr. Haddock returned to Montréal as Opus Dei's vicar in Canada.

<sup>17</sup> See José Mario FERNÁNDEZ MONTES – Onésimo DÍAZ HERNÁNDEZ – Federico M. REQUENA, *Bibliografía general de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: Obras de san Josemaría*, "Studia et Documenta" 1 (2007), p. 429.

<sup>18</sup> Debicki also departed for the Roman College after receiving his B.A. (modern languages) in 1959. He returned to the U.S. in 1964 shortly after his ordination. After Sperling spent a year in Rome, he took a teaching position at Strathmore College in Nairobi, Kenya—to promote the apostolic expansion in East Africa and help lay the foundations of Strathmore University while beginning to work in his profession.

<sup>19</sup> For Curtin and Stetson, see GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 88-105; Donlan and Helming completed their degrees in Rome and Spain. After five years at the Roman College, Donlan was ordained and received his doctorate from the Lateran University in 1962. He returned

(he became Fr. Mark), and Fr. Segarra left Boston to spend the remainder of his American days in the Midwest. He returned to Spain in 1967.

Fr. Múzquiz, who served in those years as the U.S. delegate to Opus Dei's central government<sup>20</sup>, explained why so many young American members of the Work were going to Rome in these early years. With their free cooperation, they sent them, he wrote,

in greater numbers than usual. It gave us much joy that they could be formed next to [the Founder]. If they had remained at home, the apostolate would have moved ahead faster, but I think it was a great blessing from God that so many...were able to receive formation directly from our Father. It contributed greatly to the spirit of filiation and the unity of the Work in the United States. It is another source of joy that many of those who went from here could contribute so directly to the universality of the Work by helping to start the apostolate [later on] in Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Kenya, and Nigeria<sup>21</sup>.

Those who remained in Cambridge kept in touch with “the Romans” by letter. On one occasion they learned that the Founder had told his sons from the U.S. that “if we are faithful, we’ll know how to take advantage of our country’s present situation in the world so that it might be an instrument of God. The work will be hard, but abundant fruits will come because the people are good and many generous souls will be willing to give themselves when they find their way to Our Lord—ready to help with everything they have when they meet our apostolate”<sup>22</sup>.

These words helped stimulate the apostolate in Cambridge when fall semester 1957 opened in yet another rented apartment near Harvard Square—the third floor of a shabby building on Mount Auburn Street across from Quincy House, then under construction. Boston’s Archbishop, Richard Cushing, was pleased with the personal apostolate of Opus Dei members in Cambridge and gave his approval for an Opus Dei center in Cambridge. This

to the U.S. the following year and helped develop the apostolate in New York City while serving as Catholic chaplain at Hunter College and Lehman College. Helming spent two years in Rome before returning to the U.S. to write, publish, and teach.

<sup>20</sup> In Opus Dei, delegates serve as liaison between the central government in Rome and particular Regions.

<sup>21</sup> JM; in the Founder’s frequent letters to the new Opus Dei Regions in the Western hemisphere, he gave another reason: the pressing need for priests from those countries.

<sup>22</sup> *Crónica*, abril 1957, p. 40 (AGP, P01). By “our country’s present situation in the world”, the Founder was alluding to the leadership of the U.S. in those years.



made it possible to install a temporary oratory: “We fixed up the best room. It was quite a challenge to get some larger pieces up that extremely narrow stairwell, but somehow we managed”<sup>23</sup>. Until the oratory was ready for the celebration of Mass (spring 1958), some of the students gathered there for prayer each morning before going out to Mass at St. Paul’s Church nearby.

### *Apostolate at M.I.T.*

Although few members of the Work were at Harvard in fall 1957, new people gradually found their way to the Cambridge apartment’s study room. Meditations and days of recollection (monthly 8-hour mini-retreats) continued across the river at Trimount. Students from M.I.T. attended these activities, as well as the retreats Fr. Porrás gave for the Harvard Catholic Club. Fr. Acaso’s presence in the M.I.T. chapel also acquainted students with the apartment: “Many came to see me, partly because Newman Club announcements were in English as well as Spanish”<sup>24</sup>.

Fr. Porrás received students each day in his Harvard office; in January 1958 he moved from Trimount to the apartment. More students were “coming every day to study and pray. Some go home after prayer and a short get-together, while others stay to study. We finished assembling the oratory in May, and Fr. Bill celebrated the first Mass”<sup>25</sup>. In spring semester, students from Yale University came periodically to attend days of recollection, and Carl

<sup>23</sup> GR; see CS.

<sup>24</sup> FA.

<sup>25</sup> *Crónica*, junio 1958, p. 88 (AGP, P01). Given the greater number of M.I.T. students taking part in the apostolate of Opus Dei in these years, it is appropriate to provide a brief context. (A similar one on Harvard can be found in GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 84-87). M.I.T. is well known as one of the best schools of technology in the world. Its prestige is due in part to a rigorous selection of faculty and students, which is manifest in the demanding standards. As a premier research center, the Institute generates an atmosphere of serious work among 6,000 graduate students, and the 4,000 undergraduates as well (the proverbially industrious beaver is the school’s athletic mascot.) A quantitative emphasis is reflected in the numbering (rather than naming) of the architecturally avant-garde campus buildings and academic programs. The “M.I.T. experience” emphasized engineering and cognate sciences, architecture and planning. Computer science and artificial intelligence were added in 1963. Smaller programs in humanities and social sciences reflect the quantitative orientation. Lincoln Lab (opened in 1951) conducts government-funded research in applications of science and technology to national security projects. Lacking Harvard’s self-consciousness of institutional history, M.I.T. emphasizes individual achievements in such fields as high-energy physics, atmospheric science, and computational sciences. Ironically the Charles River bridge that connects M.I.T. with Boston’s Back Bay and Trimount House

Schmitt went to New Haven to visit them. “Once Fr. Cormac accompanied me and gave a talk at the Yale Catholic Center, Thomas More House”<sup>26</sup>.

More M.I.T. students took part in the formational activities after spring retreats sponsored by the M.I.T. Newman Club (February) and the Harvard Catholic Club (April). Among them were Bob Yoest, second year graduate student in chemistry from Pittsburgh; Joe Atkinson, a new graduate student in chemistry from Alberta (Canada); Henry Helmken, another new graduate student (physics) from New York City; George Crafts, a senior from suburban Boston, and John Layter from Denver, a freshman. Yoest and Helmken had met the previous fall at the Newman Club and became good friends. The retreat planted seeds that were soon to mature in the case of Layter and Crafts.

At Regis High School in Denver, Layter’s first love had been Latin and Greek. In senior year, an interest in particle physics also surfaced, and when an adviser told him, “there’s no future in classics”, he decided to apply to California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech) to study physics. A few months before graduation, his father intervened, thinking that M.I.T. would be a better choice; one of Layter’s friends was studying there and could help with his orientation. Although the application deadline had passed, M.I.T.’s admissions committee granted an extension; Layter was accepted, and decided that “the cultural advantages of Boston” outweighed “the allure of Hollywood”.

Layter brought with him to Cambridge a 20-page paper written for senior religion class at Regis, a “Blueprint of My Life as a Catholic”. It contained an ideal of sanctity in the middle of the world, “the distilled essence of four years of Jesuit education”. At M.I.T. his older friend, a junior, introduced him to the Newman Club, where Layter began attending daily Mass—something he had not done in high school. Soon the friend, Joe Canny, brought him to Graduate House to meet Bob Yoest, a club officer—“a funny guy it was hard not to like... The pace at M.I.T. was intense, and that first semester there was time for little else but preparing for the next exam in physics, chemistry, or calculus”. Yoest kept urging him to attend Newman Club activities, but “I saw that my role then and there was to study hard if I was to attain sanctity in the middle of the world”.

is the Harvard Bridge, built in 1891, before M.I.T. moved to Cambridge. Chartered in 1861, M.I.T. began building its present campus in 1916.

<sup>26</sup> CS.

Having made Dean's List (First Honors, a select group of 20) in the fall semester, Layter could "let up" a little in the spring semester. He made time to construct a Latin placard (a line from Virgil's *Aeneid*) for the wall of his room. One day a resident of Trimount House who had also attended a Jesuit school happened to pass his open door, recognized the passage, and began a conversation. He invited Layter to the April retreat as a way to learn about Opus Dei's "vision" of holiness—which sounded much like his own.

After the opening meditation, the schedule said to "retire". But roommates Layter and Steve Zabielski, another M.I.T. freshman, talked for two hours about "this Opus Dei thing", realizing that "we were dealing with a weighty matter". When Fr. Porras spoke with Layter the next day, he suggested *God's Engineer* as a good introduction to Opus Dei. Carl Schmitt's concluding talk "seemed to fit in with my master plan"<sup>27</sup>.

Before April was over, Layter was considering whether God might be calling him to Opus Dei. On the first Sunday of May, Ed O'Brien, a senior in M.I.T.'s co-op program in electrical engineering (not yet in Opus Dei and about to take a job in Washington), invited him on a pilgrimage to the La Salette shrine north of Boston, along with several other people. This "reinforced my desire to become part of the Work", which he did the following Sunday. "I was determined not to let more time pass"<sup>28</sup>.

The retreat also made a deep impression on Crafts, who sought out Fr. Acaso in the M.I.T. chapel. "I had a question or two of a doctrinal nature. He invited me to have a cup of coffee and in our conversation suggested that I visit Trimount House"<sup>29</sup>. Many things began to crystallize at the residence; Fr. Porras preached on the spiritual significance of little things. In the get-together that followed, Opus Dei came up. When Crafts turned to ask someone what that was, Carl Schmitt (the director) was sitting right behind

<sup>27</sup> *God's Engineer*, a biography of Isidoro Zorzano by Daniel Sargent (Chicago, Scepter Press, 1954), had become a useful reference on life in Opus Dei since its publication. "It was standard reading during meals on days of recollection and retreats, and as spiritual reading on excursions" (CS). Zorzano was one of the first members of Opus Dei, a civil engineer who had been a high school classmate of the Founder.

<sup>28</sup> JL. Once exams were over, Layter began attending the Saturday meditations and get-togethers, and received orientation talks from Schmitt and Fr. Acaso. After spending the summer at home in Denver, reading classics in Christian culture in preparation for his duties as program chairman of the M.I.T. Newman Club, Layter became a resident of Trimount House and helped to find new students for Fr. Dick Rieman's Saturday night meditations and get-togethers.

<sup>29</sup> GC.

him. Not many days passed before the two of them began to meet, and Crafts came over at intervals for the Saturday activities as he completed his work at M.I.T. Late in the semester Crafts helped with a work day at Trimount and took some Latin American residents to see Boston's north shore. Why not seize the moment, Crafts thought, and a few days before receiving his B.S. degree in early June he asked for admission, having been assured that he would find another Opus Dei center near the position he had previously accepted at the Standard Oil refinery in Whiting, Indiana—not many miles from Woodlawn Residence in Chicago.

Before departing for the Midwest, Crafts thought it only proper to inform his parents about joining the Work. Schmitt recalls what followed:

His father strongly objected. Fr. Bill informed me that I would have an angry visitor the next day. But when the doorbell rang, I was greeted by a smiling face instead of an angry parent. Mr. Crafts began with an apology. "I was all set to bite your head off", he began. But that very afternoon, as parental concerns were running through his mind at work (Brooks Brothers Clothiers), Bishop John Wright had come in to buy a hat. Recognizing him, George's father saw an opportunity to find out something authoritative about Opus Dei: "Your Excellency, have you heard of an outfit called Opus Dei?" "O sure", came the answer, "it's a wonderful new organization in the Church". The Bishop tapped his Roman collar and added, "if I didn't have this, I would join Opus Dei myself!" After relating this incident, Mr. Crafts said to me, "What can I say—except fine!"<sup>30</sup>.

In early summer 1958, the secretary of the Harvard Catholic Club, Bill Dowling, a popular student who had been close to the apostolate since he arrived in 1955, died of acute leukemia only two months after its diagnosis. Fr. Porrás and several students accompanied him in the hospital, along with his parents. In his last days, Dowling asked to die in Opus Dei. He received the Last Sacraments on Trinity Sunday and died the next day, calmly and joyfully. According to Fr. Porrás, he was "growing on the inside", asking for Isidoro Zorzano's intercession, and offering his death for the intentions of the Founder<sup>31</sup>. *The Way* was a daily companion; point 735 was his favorite: "If you are an apostle, death for you will be a good friend who eases the way for you". At his funeral (attended by 2,000 persons), the Archbishop said:

<sup>30</sup> CS. After helping to begin the apostolate in northwest Indiana, Crafts went to Rome in 1963. Following ordination in 1967 he celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving for family and friends in his home parish, St. Camillus, and became chaplain of Trimount (see GC).

<sup>31</sup> Zorzano's cause of canonization had opened in 1948.

“I am happy he was so well prepared, and thankful for all that his friends did for him; his parents told me all about it”<sup>32</sup>.

In those same days, George Rossman (a June graduate) was preparing to leave for the Roman College with David Sperling and two others from the Midwest. Those who remained in the Boston area helped with the first summer camp for high school boys at Wynnview<sup>33</sup>. When recently ordained Fr. Dick Rieman, arrived in Boston, Fr. Acaso had more time to prepare for his next assignment—in Japan<sup>34</sup>.

## 1958-1959: BACK TO THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL

### *Intensifying the Apostolate*

Before the new school year opened, returning students helped with still another move, from the flat on Mount Auburn to adjoining apartments at the Ambassador. Carl Schmitt (director), Fr. Porras, and Ron Ciecuch, a graduate student, occupied one apartment, “where we set up a real oratory, the first in Cambridge”. A small altar, from a church storeroom, was embellished by “a silken cloth framed in white and a picture of Our Lady as the reredos”<sup>35</sup>. The other apartment was for study.

As the semester advanced, the pace of the apostolate quickened, following the same practice as in the past: “People would come over in the afternoon or evening to study; there would be a brief pause for prayer and a get-together, and Fr. Bill or Carl were available during the evening”<sup>36</sup>. The

<sup>32</sup> *Crónica*, julio 1958, pp. 31-34 (AGP, P01); see GR, PD. The Founder published *The Way (Camino)* in 1939.

<sup>33</sup> See *Crónica*, junio 1958, p. 88 (AGP, P01). As priest of the camp, Fr. Acaso prepared 16 pages of “Suggestions and Experiences” after the two weeks were over, including a daily schedule, small job list, excursion destinations and maps, get-together topics and games, and other experiences on dealing with “young and immature boys” in a remote area of central Vermont.

<sup>34</sup> Fr. Acaso’s English had also improved since he arrived in the U.S.: “When I preached—almost daily—Carl wrote down three of my mistakes and explained them to me afterwards” (FA). He was also keeping up his Spanish by preaching retreats for Latin American students, one of them at the Polytechnic Institute in Rensselaer, N.Y. (see FA). Fr. Rieman was the first to enter Opus Dei in the U.S. and to go to Rome.

<sup>35</sup> CS. Previously he was director of Trimount house. From 1965 until 2006 this first altar in Cambridge did service in the Greenwood oratory at Arnold Hall Conference Center on Boston’s south shore.

<sup>36</sup> See JL.

clientele included graduate students mainly from Harvard and M.I.T. Newcomers included Joe Atkinson and Henry Helmken (M.I.T.) and Hank Smith (Tufts University).

Once classes started, Helmken came to see Schmitt to settle some “unfinished business” left over from the spring retreat. The question of his vocation had been stirring in him over the summer, and by early December he was ready to resolve it by becoming a part of Opus Dei. He would move to Trimount House at the end of spring semester<sup>37</sup>.

The same decision required more time for another of the spring retreatants—Bob Yoest. He had entered M.I.T.’s doctoral program in chemistry in fall 1956 after graduating from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, his hometown. He sensed the importance of daily Mass “if I was to uphold my faith” in a challenging environment. Through Newman Club officers, he heard of the activities at Trimount House, but resisted invitations to attend<sup>38</sup>. In spring 1957 he did hear a talk at the Newman Center about the pursuit of sanctity in study and work given by Fr. Porras, but it did not move him to follow up.

When summer came Yoest returned to his former job in Pittsburgh and sought spiritual guidance from a priest he had known at Duquesne. While this failed to work out, he was more resolved than ever to find a priest who could help him work out a good life plan once he returned to Cambridge. During the fall semester nothing materialized, but prior to the spring 1958 retreat—precisely on Ash Wednesday—he finally accepted an invitation to attend an evening of recollection at Trimount House, hoping to begin spiritual direction with Fr. Porras. Instead, it was Fr. Acaso he began to see regularly. The retreat preached by Fr. Porras in April further warmed Yoest to the apostolate. He even recommended *The Way* at an M.I.T. Newman Club meeting, and started inviting fellow students to Fr. Porras’ weekly meditations. One who attended them with him was his friend, Henry Helmken, who was also speaking with Fr. Acaso.

Yoest spent the summer in Boston. Although he had been elected to an office in Graduate House he moved to Trimount, in part because the better

<sup>37</sup> Helmken was beginning his work at M.I.T.’s Lincoln Lab; later he moved to Florida to continue his professional work in atmospheric sciences and to help begin the apostolate in that state.

<sup>38</sup> RY. He first heard of Opus Dei in the fifth grade at St. Athanasius School (1945) in a story about the escape of Álvaro del Portillo and companions from the republican zone of Spain in October 1938 during the Spanish Civil War (*St. Anthony Junior Messenger*).

study environment was more likely to help him prepare for a qualifying exam in September, “but mainly to see if God had something special in mind for me”. Life in the residence brought to the forefront a “personal awareness of the need to seek my place in His plan, especially whenever I passed a photo of Msgr. Escrivá looking at me very seriously”.

Back in Graduate House in fall 1958, Yoest began inviting students to frequent prayer sessions with *The Way*; among those who attended were Helmken and Joe Atkinson (whom he had met at a Newman Club breakfast the previous semester). Yoest resumed direction with Fr. Acaso but resisted a suggestion of Fr. Porrás to contact Carl Schmitt. Early in October, however, Yoest inadvertently dialed Schmitt’s number, and did make arrangements to see him at the apartment. “He told me I had prayed long enough about joining Opus Dei, and suggested that I ask for admission as a supernumerary—which I did, then and there”<sup>39</sup>.

A few days earlier, a major event in the universal Church impacted the members of the Work in the Boston area as it did the faithful throughout the world—the death on October 9 of the only Pope they had known, Pius XII. This event and the election of his successor, Bl. John XXIII, on October 28, 1958, elicited the prayers requested by the Founder and intensified the academic and apostolic work of the members of Opus Dei<sup>40</sup>.

### *Christopher Dawson*

An event the same month at Harvard would also stimulate Opus Dei’s apostolate while contributing significantly to Catholic culture and higher education in the United States: the arrival of Christopher Dawson. In February the Divinity School had inaugurated the Charles Chauncey Stillman Guest Professorship of Roman Catholic Studies and invited the English historian to be its first recipient. When Harvard President, Nathan Pusey, announced this to the faculty, he called it “startling news”; for it is, “so far as we know, the first chair of Roman Catholic Studies ever established

<sup>39</sup> RY. Unlike numeraries, supernumerary members of Opus Dei are not committed to live in celibacy. In February 1959 Yoest attended his first retreat in Opus Dei at the home of a cooperator in West Roxbury with eight other supernumeraries, most of them married men; the preacher was Fr. Rieman.

<sup>40</sup> See *Obras*, octubre 1958, pp. 4-16 (AGP, P03); *Crónica*, octubre 1958, pp. 64-69 (AGP, P01).

in a Protestant theology school”<sup>41</sup>. Dawson (1889-1970), a convert from Anglicanism and Oxford graduate, was a giant among 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural historians and Catholic scholars.

Three things had converged to make the appointment possible: the initiative of the Harvard Catholic Club’s chaplain<sup>42</sup>, the Harvard president’s eagerness to acknowledge the contribution religion makes to higher education, and the Boston Archbishop’s support<sup>43</sup>. Fr. Porras initiated the proposal in a conversation with Chauncey Stillman (1907-1989), a wealthy Harvard graduate (1929), Catholic convert, and prominent philanthropist<sup>44</sup>. When Stillman made the formal proposal to Douglas Horton, Dean of the Divinity School, it received ready acceptance; the grant was made and the school agreed to set up a chair in honor of his father, Charles Chauncey Stillman (1877-1926), a banker, art collector, and environmentalist who was a descendent of 17<sup>th</sup> century colonists.

Dawson called his appointment “a promising adventure; ...for some years I have felt that there was a need for fuller study of Christian culture than has hitherto been found in higher education... [especially] in a Protestant university”<sup>45</sup>. But his presence had an impact beyond Cambridge, especially

<sup>41</sup> *President’s Report to the Board of Overseers*, Jan. 12, 1959, p. 3. This thaw in Harvard’s long-standing indifference and even hostility toward religion brought about the first invitation to a Boston Archbishop (soon to be Cardinal Cushing) to attend commencement (June 11, 1959) as recipient of an honorary doctorate (in laws, however, not divinity). *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, July 4, 1959, pp. 733-734.

<sup>42</sup> “Fr. Bill, along with Dean Rodgers of the Graduate Faculty (the Catholic Club’s moderator), played a major role in bringing about this appointment. I suggested Dawson as the chair’s first occupant” (CS).

<sup>43</sup> See Jeffrey WILLS (ed.), *The Catholics of Harvard Square*, St. Bede’s Publications, Petersham, Mass., 1993, p. 97. While at Harvard, Dawson lectured at several Catholic colleges in the U.S. and Canada (p. 200).

<sup>44</sup> See CS. Stillman became a benefactor of Opus Dei’s apostolate and established the Homeland Foundation and Wethersfield Institute to encourage Catholic scholarship, as well as several other university chairs. The Institute holds conferences and publishes proceedings. *Christianity and Western Civilization: Christopher Dawson’s Insights*, Vol. VII, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1995, reports the proceedings of the 1993 conference. In 1990, a year after Stillman’s death, the family estate in Dutchess County, N.Y. (Wethersfield), with its art treasures and formal garden, was opened to the public. WILLS, *The Catholics*, p. 200.

<sup>45</sup> Christina SCOTT, *A Historian and His World*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1984, p. 182. On pp. 178-203, Dawson’s biographer (his daughter) summarizes his Harvard years, beginning with the initial correspondence with Dean Horton. Chauncey Stillman left a brief account: *Christopher Dawson: Recollections from America*, *The Chesterton Review* (Dawson special issue), IX, 2 (May 1983), pp. 143-148.



in Catholic intellectual circles. Two fundamental insights underlay Dawson's scholarly efforts to engage the cultural and spiritual crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: that religion is the most important influence on culture, and that the modern world is unintelligible apart from its Christian roots. His 23 books, later promulgated by John J. Mulloy's Society for Christian Culture, inspired new Christian Culture programs at several American colleges<sup>46</sup>.

While Dawson was "something of an enigma to his Harvard colleagues"<sup>47</sup>, his presence and its emanations harmonized with Opus Dei's apostolate in Cambridge. John Layter presented him as the leadoff lecturer in the M.I.T. Newman Club's fall 1958 series; it was his first formal appearance in Cambridge<sup>48</sup>. Dawson remained at Harvard until July 1962 when poor health obliged him to resign and return to England.

## SPRING AND SUMMER 1959

### *A Farmer's Son*

When the apostolate at the Ambassador resumed in January, another retreatant from the previous year—Joe Atkinson—was advancing in his discernment process. Two months earlier he had visited a sick person with José Ramón Madurga (Fr. Ray), the second Counselor of Opus Dei in the United States (following Fr. Múzquiz), who was briefly in the Boston area on his way from Rome to Japan (there he was to serve as the first Counselor for four decades). "On the way back from our visit, he preached a meditation in the car"<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Mulloy (1916-1995) published *The Dawson Newsletter* between 1982 and 1995; it is the primary record of scholarship by and about Dawson and his students. A selection of Mulloy's Dawson-inspired articles is *Christianity and the Challenge of History*, Front Royal, Va., Christendom Press, 1995.

<sup>47</sup> WILLS, *The Catholics*, p. 203; SCOTT, *A Historian*, p. 189. The few students able to meet Dawson's high expectations stimulated him greatly. "His lectures on 'Catholicism and the Development of Western Culture', the climax of his lifetime work in the history of culture" (pp. 189-91), were published in expanded form as *The Formation of Christendom* and *The Dividing of Christendom* (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1965, 1967). They circulated widely in Catholic colleges.

<sup>48</sup> See J.L. Dr. Francis J. Braceland (1900-1985), who pioneered the field of mental health within the context of harmonizing religion and psychiatry, followed Dawson in the same series. A strong Catholic, Braceland's lifework was to liberate the practice of psychiatry from the neo-paganism of Freudian psychoanalysis.

<sup>49</sup> JA. When Fr. Madurga left for Japan, Woodlawn's first director, Sal Ferigle—now Fr. Sal since his recent ordination—became the third Counselor in Chicago. José Ramón Madurga

Shortly before Atkinson completed his degree in organic chemistry at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and summer experience as laboratory assistant to two professors, his mentor urged him to apply to M.I.T. It was the first time he had recommended an eastern graduate school to one of his students. When Atkinson arrived at Graduate House in September 1957, he sought out the Newman Club and began attending its programs. This was his preparation for the April retreat, where he met Bob Yoest and George Crafts. This “farmer’s son from central Alberta was on his way to Opus Dei”<sup>50</sup>.

Yoest brought him to a Sunday supper at Trimount at the beginning of the fall semester, 1958. Shortly afterwards, at a breakfast organized by M.I.T.’s chaplain, he was invited to attend the circle Carl Schmitt was giving every Wednesday evening at the apartment. Shortly afterwards Atkinson began the weekly trek along Massachusetts Avenue, which connects the M.I.T. and Harvard campuses, to attend the circle and to talk with Fr. Porras. “After each circle Carl would accompany me to Harvard Square, where we would have a snack at the Waldorf Cafeteria before I returned to M.I.T.”

Atkinson also attended Yoest’s informal prayer sessions in Graduate House: “Bob would read a few points from *The Way* every 2 or 3 minutes for 15 minutes. I spent the Christmas holidays with a friend’s family in suburban New York City. Carl encouraged me to keep up my practices of piety and to invite my friend to join me for mental prayer with *The Way*, which I did”. Schmitt’s circle resumed in mid January 1959; “as usual, Carl and I went to the Waldorf, but this time was different. He asked me if I would like to become a member of the Work, and I said yes! Carl had come prepared, and I wrote my letter to the Father then and there. A particular grace of which I was unaware at the time is that I had become the first Canadian numerary in Opus Dei”<sup>51</sup>.

The principal formational activities in the spring of 1959, along with the weekly circles, were retreats for the new members of the Work given by Fr. Rieman—one in February at the home of a Boston cooperator and the

(1922-2002) joined Opus Dei while studying engineering in Madrid. He helped begin the apostolate in Ireland in 1947, and came to the U.S. after his ordination in 1951. In 1958 he began his long service (until 1997) as regional vicar of Opus Dei in Japan. *Romana. Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei* 18 (2002), p. 145.

<sup>50</sup> JA.

<sup>51</sup> JA. Atkinson moved to Trimount that summer after a short trip to Alberta and the new center in Montréal. After graduation, he began a long research career with Merck Frosst Canada, and served as the first director of Riverview, a student residence in Montréal. In 1999 he helped to establish the Opus Dei apostolate in Vancouver. As Atkinson mentions, admission is requested by expressing a desire to form part of Opus Dei in a letter.

other in April at the home of another cooperator in Austin, Québec, a hundred miles east of Montréal.

Henry Helmken invited Hank Smith, his former classmate at Manhattan College, to Mass and a get-together at Trimount on the feast of St. Joseph. Soon he began attending the Saturday meditations. “Like everyone else I found Fr. Dick interesting and fun”, Smith relates<sup>52</sup>. Layter adds: His “preaching was occasionally profound (insights from the Founder [with whom he had spent several years in Rome]), occasionally vigorous (shouting and pounding the table), and never boring”<sup>53</sup>.

### *Summer in Chicago and Wynnview*

After a short break to visit families or finish pending projects, ten residents of the Ambassador and Trimount headed for Chicago to attend the largest summer course thus far at Woodlawn—some 35 numeraries from Washington, the Midwest, and Boston. The students were accommodated three and even six to a room, with an overflow of the older people in a near north apartment, Lincoln Park West.

The philosophy classes were taught by Fr. Porras, Fr. Ignatius (Nacho) Gómez Lecomte, a Colombian from the center of studies in Washington, Fr. Gonzalo (Al) Díaz, chaplain of Randall House, in Madison, Wis., Fr. Jim Albrecht, recently ordained in Madrid, and Fr. Sal Ferigle, Counselor of the Chicago Region of Opus Dei. John Layter tutored whoever needed help with Latin. Anecdotes from “the early days” and news from Rome were favorite topics in get-togethers.

“Fr. Joseph [Múzquiz] would pass through now and then, sometimes coming from Rome or leaving for Japan. The nights he was in Chicago he slept on a canvas foldout [cot] in a tiny basement room behind the furnace. Next morning, he would tell us that he had slept ‘just fine’<sup>54</sup>—dreaming, perhaps, of the apostolate that would soon be engaging those young men in various parts of the world. The course moved to Randall House, the student residence in Madison, Wis., for the final two weeks. At the end of the summer, the newest members got an extra week at Twin Lakes, near the upper peninsula of Michigan, while the others returned to their centers<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> HS.

<sup>53</sup> JL.

<sup>54</sup> JL.

<sup>55</sup> See JL, JG, and RF.

Also that summer, four 2-week camps for boys aged 14 to 18 took place at Wynnview, the second year in a long and continuing series in Vermont and in other states. As the previous summer, they received a meditation and talk every day and learned to practice a spirit of service and self-denial.<sup>56</sup> Between the camps two summer workshops for Canadian and American supernumeraries took place at Wynnview<sup>57</sup>.

As summer ended, two young men who for some time had been searching for God's way to accommodate themselves to His plan for their lives were able to resolve their quest—an architect named Henry Menzies, and Bob Yoest. First Menzies: He had first heard of Opus Dei in 1955 from Bishop Vincent Waters of Raleigh, North Carolina, his native state. Menzies, a recent convert<sup>58</sup>, had just completed four years in the Navy and was finishing his architecture degree at North Carolina State University's School of Design in Raleigh. The following year several members of the Work including Fr. José (Jay) Meroño visited Bishop Waters in Raleigh and met Menzies. In a subsequent meeting, Fr. Meroño gave Menzies a brief explanation of Opus Dei and suggested that perhaps he was called to live in celibacy. "I dismissed that immediately", Menzies recalls, "because it was far from how I envisioned my future". In 1957, during similar visits from Washington,

<sup>56</sup> See *Crónica*, septiembre 1959, pp. 34-36 (AGP, P01).

<sup>57</sup> See RY.

<sup>58</sup> Menzies was born into a Protestant family in Hickory, N.C. in 1928. He has written an account of his conversion process, "From Sasebo to Rome" (1992, 2004, in manuscript). Four years of Korean War service with the Navy took him to San Diego, Sasebo (Japan), Newport, R.I., and Naples. In Japan he experienced a "crisis of faith" (p. 11). A year later he spent a 3-day liberty in Rome; while visiting St. Peter's Basilica with a group of officers, sailors, and Marines from his ship (USS Quincy CA71), he was in a very critical, anti-Catholic frame of mind when he happened to glance at a Marine (a Catholic) who was lighting a candle at the high altar above the Apostle's tomb. "I was startled to see such simple, child-like trust in his eyes, full of faith, and then within myself I heard distinctly the words, 'I am the light of the world'. It was instant conversion and repentance—the greatest single event of my life. *I knew He is*" (p. 17). The search for "His Church" took two more years, which included a program of spiritual reading and "long tutorials" with a Catholic Navy chaplain, Fr. Ouelette. Tom Flynn, his roommate aboard ship, a devout Catholic, was an additional influence on his conversion. Menzies began attending Mass and resolved to become a Catholic, which he did in May 1955 while completing active duty in Coronado, Calif. He was prepared by Cdr. John Murphy USN and confirmed by the first Bishop of San Diego, Charles F. Buddy. Menzies returned to North Carolina as a Lieutenant in the Naval Reserves to face vigorous opposition from his parents and to complete his architecture degree.

Menzies met Greg Haddock, Fr. Múzquiz, and Fr. Burke. “I was certain God wanted me to marry and practice architecture”<sup>59</sup>.

When his studies were completed, in summer 1958, Menzies drove to Boston to look for a position. “My plan was to spend a year or so working in a large office and then return home. I had fallen in love with Boston while at Officer Candidate School in Newport, R.I.” Following Bishop Waters’ advice, he had obtained a copy of *The Way* at Woodlawn Residence in 1956 while on Naval Reserve duty near Chicago.

In Boston, Menzies introduced himself at Trimount House, as Fr. Meroño had advised. “Of course I had no intention of living there”. He found an attractive job and an apartment on Beacon Hill facing Louisburgh Square—“a terrific place for an architect”. Once settled, he began attending meditations, took part in excursions to Wynnview, and received spiritual direction from Fr. Rieman. Before long they became good friends. In spring 1959 he was asked to consider joining Opus Dei as a supernumerary:

I did. Why not? The vocation of a supernumerary is easy to comprehend. Isn’t it laudable for a Catholic layman to give himself to God and at the same time have a wife, family, and wonderful job? It’s just the normal way to live in this world, and so it fit into my plan very well to let the spirit of the Work inform my professional life. This meant attending Carl Schmitt’s circles and striving to sanctify my daily work. When that very hot summer came, my apartment mate (Roger Green) and I decided to move to Trimount—just for the summer, I thought.

I would have remained a contented supernumerary all my life if my old friend, Fr. Jay Meroño, had not come from Washington on August 25. After dinner he asked to speak with me in private. We went to my room, and with his face close to mine, he came right to the point: “Hwhy you are not a numerary??” I resisted because I had the same ambitions of most people my age. I enjoyed my work with [the architectural firm] Perry Shaw immensely; I was leading an “ordinary life”; I had several girl friends and was regularly dating a girl from England.

We must have talked more than an hour. The more I resisted the barrage of his cogent reasons (he was *very* insistent) the less sure I was of my answers. Way down deep a voice was calling—the same voice that had been calling for years, even before I became a Catholic, that voice in Rome—“*I am the light of the world*”. Slowly I realized that it was the voice of the One I loved most... Finally, I said “Yes!” and realized that it was really what I always wanted but had been unable to face.

<sup>59</sup> HM.

It was very hot that night; next morning I awoke in a terrified sweat. All I could think was “*What have I done?!*”. But it was not a bad dream; it was all too real. Not long after, that terror turned to joy as I began to sense that I would gain much more than I had given up—“brothers and sisters, children, lands, houses...”. It was like starting to live all over again. What exhilarating freedom!<sup>60</sup>.

Fr. Meroño turned next to Bob Yoest, once again spending the summer at Trimount and somewhat uneasy about his status as a supernumerary. At the beginning of September Fr. Meroño helped him see clearly how to resolve that uneasiness: “The week after he saw Henry [Menziez], Fr. Jay wanted to speak with me. When I went to his room, he said (in his distinctive accent), ‘*Hwhy you are not a numerary??*’ I was able to give *him* an answer, but not myself. So that very day I asked for admission”<sup>61</sup>.

#### 1959-1960: ELMBROOK

##### *End of the Apartment Era*

The apostolate in Cambridge was outgrowing the apartment; something larger and more permanent was needed. Toward the end of August arrangements were made to purchase a white 3-storey frame house located at 25 Follen Street. At first it was simply referred to as “the Cambridge house”, but to avoid confusion with the Cambridge House Inn a short distance away, the center was given the name Elmwood the following year. The presence of another Elmwood in Cambridge led to a final change to Elmbrook. To simplify matters, the name Elmbrook will be used in this account<sup>62</sup>.

The location was ideal, just across Cambridge Common from Harvard Square on a quiet, narrow dogleg street named for Charles Follen, professor

<sup>60</sup> HM. After his first summer course at Wynnview, Menziez became a resident of Trimount House, and not many years later its director.

<sup>61</sup> RY. With a brief interlude at Elmbrook, Trimount was Yoest’s home until he went to Rome in 1965. After ordination (1968), his fluency in German made his assignment to Austria logical, but seven years later he was off to Nigeria to begin a long tenure helping to develop the apostolate there.

<sup>62</sup> The original Elmwood, a pre-Revolutionary landmark, is located at 1767 Brattle St. The story of the name changes is told by Layter, Yoest, Smith, and Bernie Villegas. The name Elmbrook emerged in a get-together after dinner in October 1961. “Fr. Ed Cheesman coined the word, even imagining that a brook actually ran beneath Follen Street. We humored him and adopted the name” (BV).

of German at Harvard in the first half of the 19th century. The large house had well-proportioned rooms and a spacious yard on one side. As it had been used during World War II as a residence for Naval officers studying at Harvard, many of the walls were painted “battleship gray”, and many floors had been covered with linoleum. An elderly couple unable to take proper care of the house had occupied it after the war. All in all, it needed a lot of work, as Layter and Schmitt soon discovered.

The move from the Ambassador took place a little before fall semester began. The fast change surprised Layter: “Arriving at Trimount the night before a math exam, I was told not to unpack since I would be moving the next day”<sup>63</sup>. Friends helped to cart beds, bookshelves, chests, and decorations the short distance to Follen Street. All were delighted with the new house, but it was hard to leave behind so many memories<sup>64</sup>.

Henry Menzies recalls picturesque aspects of the move: “It was some operation lowering the altar from outside the building—in the middle of the night to avoid wonderment in the neighborhood. On Follen Street, too, it seemed better to move in at night, and let our neighbors meet us under normal circumstances. We got on especially well with those next door (the family of Prof. Detliv Vaghts of the Law School)”<sup>65</sup>.

Elmbrook was occupied for the first time on September 14, 1959, feast of the Holy Cross. The following morning, the first Mass (Our Lady of Sorrows) was celebrated in the new center; the provisional oratory was located in a front room on the second floor. “We repainted the room and made a wooden cover for the radiator to serve as a credence stand. The closet became a sacristy. Later an ornate chest placed in the hall served as a vesting table”<sup>66</sup>. Colonial benches completed the oratory furnishings.

The next priority, a study room on the second floor, was fairly easy compared to the task Layter and an assistant undertook—cleaning the

<sup>63</sup> JL.

<sup>64</sup> In spring 1963 Harvard acquired the Ambassador Hotel, which had played such a key role in the Cambridge apostolate. It was renovated in 1966 and housed married students (as Coolidge Hall) until 2002, when the Knafel Center replaced it (Harvard Archive, supplied on disk by archivist Marvin Hightower).

<sup>65</sup> HM.

<sup>66</sup> JL. The chest was a gift of the Trimount Ladies Auxiliary, along with other decorations “that are still in the house: the antique banjo clock in the front hall, the wrought iron candelabra in the dining room, and a pair of portraits in elaborate gold frames now in Chestnut Hill. Bishop [John] Wright [earlier of Boston, now of Worcester] gave the two framed lithographs on either side of the clock” (CS).

kitchen stove. “It took several days to clean and put back together”<sup>67</sup>. At first the residents did the housekeeping and cooking<sup>68</sup>. but before long, two ladies were engaged<sup>69</sup>.

### *Resumption of Activities*<sup>70</sup>

With the provisional oratory and the study room ready, formation classes (circles) for graduate students, upperclassmen, and freshmen resumed. Prior to the Saturday evening meditation, some students helped wash windows, shelve books, repair things in the house, and clean the yard. One student who used to come to the apartment invited a friend over to study. “Why?” he asked; “there are so many fine places right on campus”. “Because there’s also an oratory to help you study better”<sup>71</sup>.

On September 19, Fr. Múzquiz arrived with the delegate of the new Washington Region, Fr. Bernardo (Bernard) Fernández Árdavin; Fr. Múzquiz gave a meditation the following morning. As both men had recently been with St. Josemaría, “their news was very welcome”. By that time, most of the residents had arrived. Carl Schmitt was director, and Fr. Porras the priest of the center. A second priest, Fr. Javier Eduardo (Ed) Cheesman Jiménez, a Peruvian, was the last to arrive. “While still a layman (a journalist), the government had expelled him. He was small, compact, elegant in his clerical attire. He was fluent in French, but English was a challenge”<sup>72</sup>.

The house was sufficiently in order to permit the first Saturday meditation and get-together on September 26, and a few days later a solemn Mass in observance of the 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei (October 2). Trimount’s first director, Manolo Barturen, came from New York, where he was laying foundations for the apostolate. The Catholic Club and Schmitt’s contacts in the Harvard houses helped to inform people of

<sup>67</sup> JL, HS.

<sup>68</sup> See JA.

<sup>69</sup> See JL.

<sup>70</sup> This account concentrates on the histories of early members of Opus Dei because it is primarily intended to record the expansion of the apostolate in and from the United States. But in addition to those students, many others took part in the formational activities offered by the laymen and priests; many priests take part in this history because there was a great deal of mobility and exchange to secure the necessary continuity in the apostolate as more experienced priests moved to new assignments.

<sup>71</sup> *Crónica*, febrero 1960, pp. 75-77 (AGP, P01).

<sup>72</sup> JL. Fr. Cheesman was one of the first Peruvian members of Opus Dei.



the celebration. From the beginning, the oratory and living room were filled every Saturday with students from Harvard, M.I.T., and occasionally Yale. Friday evening philosophy classes began, and talks on aspects of Opus Dei on Saturday mornings<sup>73</sup>.

In early October, the Catholic Club held a reception for new students. Among those Fr. Porras met was Bernardo (Bernie) Villegas, who had come from Manila to begin graduate study in economics. "He told me about the residence on Follen Street, and when I told him I had never heard of Opus Dei, he invited me over to get acquainted. A few days later Bobby Paterno, a doctoral student in oriental studies, invited me for Mass"<sup>74</sup>. Soon Villegas was attending one of Schmitt's circles.

### *Fall Newcomers*

Owen Hughes, a graduate of the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., arrived at M.I.T. to start graduate school in naval architecture and marine engineering. He had met Opus Dei in suburban Chicago. Hank Smith, whom Henry Helmken introduced to Opus Dei the previous year, was in second year of graduate school at Tufts University. The preceding summer he had written his masters thesis and attended a summer institute on theoretical physics at Brandeis University<sup>75</sup>. Having begun to attend Bob Yoest's prayer sessions, the October 10 weekend at the Vermont farmhouse was especially memorable for Smith, who had taken "naturally" to the practice of daily Mass...

On Saturday Henry [Menziés] and I went for a walk and he spoke to me about the Work as a lifetime commitment... After Sunday Mass I spoke briefly with Fr. Joe [José María Escribano]<sup>76</sup>. Our conversation continued the next evening, back in Boston and I asked for admission. There were

<sup>73</sup> With respect to these classes, all numeraries study philosophy and theology at the university level, as compatible with their academic studies and professional work. A large part of the classes are taken on summer courses, and the remainder in the evening and on weekends during the academic year.

<sup>74</sup> BV. Paterno arrived from Manila in late summer 1958 and briefly attended a circle at the apartment. On completing his doctorate at Harvard he returned to Manila to teach at the Ateneo de Manila University; later he served as a Fellow of the Institute of Corporate Directors.

<sup>75</sup> See HS. Later Smith would transfer to Northeastern University in Boston and take his Ph.D. in physics.

<sup>76</sup> Fr. Escribano was awaiting a replacement at Trimount so that he could take his new assign-

the usual congratulations and I went to bed excited, praying for the whole world... I had just given my life to God with a clear sense that it was the right thing to do. Why was it clear? I don't know any explanation except grace...<sup>77</sup>.

Toward the end of October, Fr. Árdavin and Fr. Gómez brought from Washington a better crucifix for the oratory. Layter carved numerals for the Way of the Cross in an M.I.T. machine shop. St. Nicholas made his appearance in the stairwell leading to the third floor when Schmitt's father, Carl Sr., an accomplished artist, contributed a portrait with the inscription<sup>78</sup>. A *Vale la pena* frieze was later brought from Rome<sup>79</sup>. The largest challenge was the basement: "It was so forbidding that one had to summon courage to go down there"<sup>80</sup>.

On Sunday evenings members of the Work at Trimount would come to Elmbrook to join the residents; Fr. Porras (sometimes Fr. Rieman or a visitor from Washington) would give a meditation, and a lively get-together followed in that small living room<sup>81</sup>.

### *Elmbrook's First New Members*

During that first semester, several students asked for admission to Opus Dei, beginning in October with Pancho Rivero, a business student from Venezuela at Harvard. He had helped put the house in order the first week. Rivero was fluent in several languages; always well dressed, he brought a presence that brightened every occasion<sup>82</sup>. Bernie Villegas followed on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. "It was a Saturday. After the meditation, Benediction, and *Salve Regina*, Carl and I had a conversation, and I asked to

ment in Montréal. On Oct. 24, Smith, Menzies, and Yoest (the "Wynnview Committee"), drove him to Piedmont.

<sup>77</sup> HS. Smith began a long teaching career at Northeastern after completing his degree.

<sup>78</sup> In 1934, St. Josemaría designated St. Nicholas as intercessor of Opus Dei for financial needs; an inscription asking him to "take care of the house" (*curam domus age*) accompanies his image in Opus Dei centers.

<sup>79</sup> *Vale la pena* ("It's worth while") is how St. Josemaría referred to devoting oneself to the apostolate.

<sup>80</sup> JL.

<sup>81</sup> See HS. The visitors included Fathers José (Jay) Meroño, Antonio (Tony) Linares, and the new Counselor, Ignatius Gramunt.

<sup>82</sup> See JL. Rivero later helped to develop the apostolate in New York City before returning to Venezuela.

be admitted there and then. Besides activities at the house, Wynnview excursions had brought me closer to the Work”<sup>83</sup>.

A few months earlier an M.I.T. newcomer had appeared on the scene when Bob Yoest met Ronald Woodhead at a reception for graduate students at the Newman Center. Woodhead was on sabbatical from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, where he taught civil engineering. He had left his family there so as not to disrupt their schooling. Shortly afterwards Yoest invited a student to Sunday dinner at Trimount; Woodhead happened to be one of his roommates and asked to come along.

After that first visit, “Ron started coming to all of the spiritual activities in the residence and quickly became ‘the life of the party’”. Eventually he moved in and became the roommate of Owen Hughes. By Christmas both were ready to ask for admission to Opus Dei. Little could they have suspected that they would collaborate a few years later when the apostolate began in Australia”<sup>84</sup>.

Following a retreat during the Christmas recess, the members of the Work gathered at Elmbrook on New Year’s Eve for a traditional Midnight Mass. The following weekend Joe Atkinson and a few others went to Wynnview to join Fr. Escribano and several students from Montréal. One of them, Joe recalls, was “a bright young fellow named David Sands. Fr. Joe asked me to talk with him about his vocation even though it was our first meeting. A year later he asked for admission, and in 1967 became the first Canadian [in Opus Dei] to be ordained”<sup>85</sup>.

In January 1960, toward the end of the semester, Henry Helmken introduced Hank Smith to Elmbrook because it was closer to Tufts than Trimount. Smith volunteered to help in any way he could. A project awaited helpers: Carl Schmitt had typed onto stencils the metaphysics notes composed by Fr. Meroño (400 pages in two volumes). Along with John Layter, Smith took on the task of duplicating a hundred copies for the summer courses. “We obtained a hand-cranked mimeograph machine and installed it in the

<sup>83</sup> BV. A hymn to Our Lady, usually the *Salve Regina*, is sung after Benediction on Saturdays in Opus Dei centers. Villegas became the first Philippine numerary; he would be instrumental in beginning the apostolate in Manila (1964) following his graduation from Harvard in 1963.

<sup>84</sup> RY. Woodhead welcomed Hughes and George Block to Sydney in July 1963. After helping to establish the apostolate in Australia, Hughes returned to the U.S. to teach at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

<sup>85</sup> JA.

basement—still unimproved since we moved in—together with reams of paper and the necessary inks and solvents. It was a formidable job by the light of a bare bulb hanging from the ceiling”<sup>86</sup>.

Many new students took part in the activities at Elmbrook that first semester. It was not until the first days of December that Joe Martins came into the picture. Layter relates the story:

I invited Joe to the house because of all my classmates I considered him the most likely to understand the Work. He was a Rhode Islander of Portuguese ancestry, a high dean’s list chemistry major with straight A’s. [Layter had the same credentials in physics.] I had gotten to know him the previous year on the squash court, and at the Newman Center. He belonged to what was known as the “liberal intellectual crowd”.

I informed Carl in advance that Joe was coming over, and since he was going out, Carl advised me to have him talk with Fr. Bill if he wanted to ask for admission. I thought that highly unlikely...

Joe and I spent the next two hours going through some philosophical and theological points that could help him see his place in the whole picture. When I heard Carl return, I suggested Joe talk all this over with him. I waited outside the oratory for over an hour. Finally I heard the squeak Carl’s desk drawer made when it was opened, and I knew he was taking out a sheet of paper. A few minutes later, they emerged, and Joe told me he had asked for admission...<sup>87</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> JL. He continues: “This was the ‘famous’ text in which the Greek word *ousía* was mistaken by the typist as ‘*ouglá*’. Summer after summer, it was a byword in our metaphysics classes”. José Meroño (1922-2007) met Opus Dei in his native Murcia, Spain, in the 1940s while pursuing studies in the humanities. He helped to begin the apostolate of Opus Dei in Washington in 1956 and carried on an extensive work with diocesan priests in Baltimore during the 1960s. He devoted himself to teaching philosophy to young members of the Work, and is especially remembered for his youthful liveliness, ready wit, and thick Andalusian accent. In 1969 he moved to Puerto Rico to help begin the work of Opus Dei, and in 1975 returned to Spain, where he assisted the apostolate in Granada for 32 years. Centro Sacerdotal, *Agenda Ronda80 blogspot*, June 2007.

<sup>87</sup> JL. After graduating from M.I.T., Martins spent several more years at Harvard to take his doctorate in chemistry. Thereafter he went to Sydney to serve as Master of Warrane College at the University of New South Wales. For his subsequent career, see the article on Warrane College in the same volume of «*Studia et Documenta*».

## SPRING AND SUMMER 1960

### *The Blessing of Elmbrook*

Bob Yoest and Henry Menzies joined the weekend philosophy classes in late January. Menzies himself was in for a surprise that spring—two architectural jobs (designing and installing showers at the Wynnview farmhouse to be ready for summer courses; designing and supervising the construction of an Elmbrook annex). The second of these jobs called for “a wing with a 30-seat chapel, vestibule and sacristy, and a lower level containing the library and a large area for study or recreation”<sup>88</sup>.

The need for a definitive oratory was a topic of conversation at the principal event of the spring semester—the blessing of the house by Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Riley, pastor since the previous year of St. Peter’s parish a few blocks west of the house<sup>89</sup>. He was accompanied by Msgr. Walter Murphy, Vicar General of the Archdiocese, and several other clergy, friends of Fr. Porras since the beginning. He provides some background in a contemporary account:

Those who first came to Boston [1946-1952] went to visit Msgr. Riley, who at that time was Rector of St. John’s seminary. They explained the Work to him and the apostolate it looked forward to in Boston. When we were preparing to open Trimount House, he and his friends gave us sacred vessels and other oratory furnishings. They also helped when the Wynnview oratory was installed.

When Msgr. Riley came to St. Peter’s, he said: “Now that I’m so close I can keep helping you”. After we moved to the new house, we promised to have him over. When he became an Auxiliary Bishop [December 1959], we asked him to bless the house. Msgr. Murphy has also known us since we first arrived. He has great admiration for “the visible results” of the apostolate, and has also been generous in helping us<sup>90</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> HM. “Over the years I had a lot to do with fixing up the old place in Vermont, usually accompanied by Fr. Dick [Rieman], its greatest promoter”. Both Wynnview and the Elmbrook annex are still in use.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Joseph Riley (1900-1977), a Boston native, was ordained priest in 1927 and bishop in 1959; after filling several administrative posts he served as one of Boston’s Auxiliaries until retirement in 1976.

<sup>90</sup> *Crónica*, junio 1960, pp. 67-69 (AGP, P01). Fr. Porras and Fr. Cheesman are pictured alongside four ecclesiastical dignitaries. Msgr. Murphy had put Fr. Porras in contact with the real estate agent (Mildred Baird) who located Trimount House in 1953. She, too, was present at the blessing of Elmbrook.

Cooperators, old friends, and new neighbors, including some Harvard faculty members, attended the ceremony and reception at Elmbrook. As Fr. Porras was in his final semester as Harvard Catholic Club chaplain, it was also an occasion to recognize his six years of service. From Cambridge he went to Pamplona, Spain, to complete his doctorate in canon law<sup>91</sup>, passing on his duties at Elmbrook to Fr. Cheesman, and at the Catholic Club to Fr. Joseph I. Collins, an assistant at St. Paul's parish<sup>92</sup>.

### *Harvard Business School*

Fr. Porras recounts his last initiative as the Catholic Club chaplain:

More than a hundred Catholics enroll each year at Harvard Business School, along with many others who are non-Catholics, unbelievers, or even self-styled atheists. Many professors and students would resolutely refuse to have any kind of religious involvement. Nevertheless, the Cardinal had told me, "All the Catholic students at Harvard are your responsibility". Wanting to help those young people and fulfill the Cardinal's trust, I was eager to open a path for our apostolate in that school. So I begged Our Lord for it over and over.

Every day I had looked [across the Charles River] at the Business School's imposing buildings; every day, too, I had seen lists of recruiters from major businesses, banks, and industries coming to find students for responsible jobs. After some years, they will be managers. How much good they could do! But in the school they are inaccessible, and running away from God. This problem had to have a solution. It did: "God and daring"—praying and using the means<sup>93</sup>.

At a meeting of the campus chaplains, Fr. Porras suggested that they meet with the dean to explore ways their ministry might be extended to the

<sup>91</sup> After completing his degree Fr. Porras (1922-1988) returned to the U.S. late in 1963 to spend two years at the new center in Forest Hills (Queens, N.Y.). There he rejoined Schmitt, Helming, Rivero, and the recently ordained Fr. Donlan, who were working on a short-lived monthly magazine of news and commentary, *Report* (PD, RY). In 1965 Fr. Porras returned to Mexico and resumed his research and writing on legal history. "The last time I saw him was in 1964 on the steps of the New York Public Library. With a characteristic quip, he came up the steps to greet me: 'Henry, I've been put out to pasture!'" (HM).

<sup>92</sup> At this point the Harvard Catholic Club merged with the club at neighboring Radcliffe College for women to become the Harvard-Radcliffe Catholic Club. Fr. Collins served until 1966.

<sup>93</sup> *Crónica*, septiembre 1959, pp. 26-28 (AGP, P01).

Business School. A meeting was arranged. One chaplain explained the campus ministry and proposed its extension to the Business School. Various ways were brought up, but Fr. Porras found them “purely human—no God, no daring. So I commended myself to the Lord and spoke up: ‘This is all well and good, and I agree with it. But what I need is a place where the Catholic business students can come to see me. This year there are 198 of them, all too busy to look for me. I know they need me, so I want to go to them’”<sup>94</sup>.

Although there was some opposition, Fr. Porras insisted: “Catholic business students have a right and a duty to let me speak to them about our faith”. Eventually the assistant dean agreed to turn an office for visiting professors into a chaplain’s office. Each chaplain used it on a given day of the week. Fr. Porras’s day was Tuesday. He continues: “The first day a Catholic professor came to congratulate me for having found a way to be available to the students. A little later, a student came to see me about a problem that had been bothering him for five years. Every Tuesday more students came”. After citing some examples, the account concludes: “One day, Opus Dei came up in conversation with a student. His words were enough to compensate me for all the effort it took to open this office: ‘I hadn’t imagined that Opus Dei was so close’”<sup>95</sup>.

Fr. Rieman preached a retreat for a dozen students in the suburban home of Mrs. Virginia Paine that spring of 1960<sup>96</sup>. When Mrs. Paine was first approached about using the house “she was a little surprised, but after giving it some thought, decided it would be a fine idea”<sup>97</sup>.

Soon afterwards, Mrs. Paine wrote what may be the only recorded words of this generous cooperator who helped the Boston apostolate from the beginning:

When I returned from Mass this morning I could not keep from thinking about the graces remaining from the retreat and understood more clearly

<sup>94</sup> *Crónica*, septiembre 1959, pp. 26-28 (AGP, P01).

<sup>95</sup> *Crónica*, septiembre 1959, pp. 26-28 (AGP, P01). This is the origin of what eventually became the Association of Catholic Business Students; a similar one followed in the Law School, where Sunday Mass is celebrated in an inter-denominational chapel.

<sup>96</sup> One of the students was a sophomore, John Flader, who “was very impressed by the dynamism of Fr. Rieman”. JF. Virginia Paine’s late husband was a noted naval architect and a descendant of colonial patriot, Robert Treat Paine, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. She was a convert from Episcopalianism and one of the original members of the Trimount Ladies Auxiliary. There was a chapel in her home, where Fr. Porras celebrated Mass on occasion. The house was located in Bushville-by-Brook-in-Forest, town of Wayland (RY).

<sup>97</sup> RY.

what it means to be an instrument in God's hands. I'll never be able to tell you how beautiful and real it all seemed to me. So you left something marvelous, something that makes it all worthwhile. I am happy that you asked to use this place. I think it was truly a great blessing for my house<sup>98</sup>.

### *More Newcomers*

John Flader, a sophomore from Wisconsin, chemistry student and member of the Harvard Band, came to Elmbrook to ask for admission in April, shortly after Fr. Rieman's retreat. Villegas recalls: "He was our ski instructor on excursions to Wynnview, an 'all-around athlete' as well as a fine musician (piano and trombone)"<sup>99</sup>. Flader's recollection:

In high school I often thought that God was calling me to something, but it wasn't the priesthood. Until I participated in an exchange program and met hundreds of American students from all over the country, I had only thought of the University of Wisconsin, but this experience expanded my horizons and put the idea of applying to Harvard or Yale into my mind. Both admitted me.

In freshman year my Quaker, Jewish, and Protestant suitemates and I had long discussions about religion, and I soon realized that my formation was inadequate. I began attending Harvard Catholic Club functions and its January retreat. There I met Ron Ciecuch, a doctoral student in chemistry, who told me about the activities in the Ambassador Hotel. I immediately decided to attend with the realization that this would be the formation I needed. Shortly afterwards, in a meditation by Fr. Bill, I remember being very impressed by the introductory prayer. The others at the apartment were very friendly, and I resolved to keep going there.

Soon I was in Carl's circle and receiving spiritual direction from Fr. Bill. Gradually my spiritual life improved and I began attending daily Mass at St. Paul's. The following summer back home, I returned to my job at the Kohler Company, happily assembling showerheads while saying numerous aspirations and offering my work to God.

Back at Harvard in the fall, I continued attending the Saturday activities at the new center on Follen Street and once again made the Catholic Club retreat. Sometime thereafter I was asked whether I had considered joining Opus Dei; the truth was that I had, but I said No. I was asked to pray about it, which I did—every day in the thanksgiving after Mass.

<sup>98</sup> *Crónica*, septiembre 1960, pp. 46-48 (AGP, P01).

<sup>99</sup> BV; see JL.



After Easter break and a date with a hometown girl, the vocational question became more pressing. Finally, after Mass on April 12, I told Our Lord that if it was his will, I would join the Work. That lifted a heavy burden, and the same evening I went to the center to speak with Carl. At last I was home<sup>100</sup>.

Another newcomer was Bob Paluszka, a Marine Corps veteran and graduate of Babson Institute in suburban Wellesley. Several years later he spent a short time in Washington, D.C. before moving to the Philippines. His concentration in international business was to see good service in a long career at the Center for Research and Communication in Manila, subsequently the University of Asia and the Pacific. He was also a pioneer in organizing youth clubs in the Philippines, where he died in 2009<sup>101</sup>.

Wynnview saw an even busier summer of youth camps and courses. The first conference organized by Opus Dei for diocesan priests in the U.S. took place nearby at Stowe, Vermont. Those remaining at Elmbrook for the summer met a new member of the Work from the University of Notre Dame, Hilary Mahaney; at the behest of his father, he went on to the family home in Saco, Maine after a few weeks at Elmbrook, and subsequently completed his degree at the University of Maine in Orono. The first of many weekend trips from Cambridge to see Mahaney and his friends began in the fall<sup>102</sup>.

## 1960-1961: CENTER OF STUDIES

### *A Sudden Expansion*

Opus Dei opened its first centers of study in the United States (Chicago and Washington) in 1957 to provide an integrated program of spiritual and

<sup>100</sup>JF. He continued to reside on campus (Leverett House) until senior year, when he moved to Elmbrook. After an intensive summer of philosophy (1962) he entered the Roman College in August, continued his studies (canon law) in Spain (1965) and was ordained in Segovia two years later. Shortly afterwards (March 1968) he went to Australia to help develop the apostolate in Sydney, Hobart, and Melbourne.

<sup>101</sup>See RY, BV.

<sup>102</sup>See RY. Rico Fortunato and Greg Haddock made the trips to Orono (five hours each way); as Mahaney expanded his group of friends a circle began. *Crónica*, marzo 1962, pp. 49-51 (AGP, P01). "Hilary was always cheerful and very faithful" (JA). After graduation (1963) he returned to Boston to teach high school for a year and then went to Rome to prepare for ordination. His priestly service has been primarily in St. Louis and Chicago, where he became parochial vicar of St. Mary of the Angels, entrusted to priests of Opus Dei.

intellectual formation for younger members of the Work while they pursued their university studies or professional work. The Washington center, Baltimore Lodge, enrolled students from several countries in the Western hemisphere. On a visit to the August 1960 summer course at Wynnview, Fr. Múzquiz announced this center's move to Cambridge, a location with many advantages because of its proximity to several universities.

Carl Schmitt continued as director, and Fr. Cheesman (joined now by Fr. Alphonse Genua) added teaching to his pastoral duties<sup>103</sup>. Students from several Latin American countries and Canada joined the Elmbrook residents; others moved from Trimount (Greg Haddock, Henry Menzies, John Flader, and Rico Fortunato). The house, although large, was pressed beyond capacity. "Canvas bunk beds were supported by springs around the outer frame"<sup>104</sup>. Philosophy and theology classes met on weeknights and Saturdays.

As the fall semester got under way, "the level of activity and discipline in the house made a quantum jump", John Layter recalls. A typical day at Elmbrook started with morning prayer and Holy Mass, breakfast, and then the students departed for classes or research projects. Some residents returned for lunch while others used the lunch break to meet with friends on or near campus. More study or work in the afternoon preceded a break for sports or some extra-curricular activity. Dinner was followed by a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, a half-hour get-together, the family Rosary and study or tasks in the house until time to gather in the oratory for the day-ending examination of conscience.

Harvard, M.I.T., and Tufts students continued to fill the oratory and living room on Saturday evenings. Sometimes, "invited guests led after-dinner discussions. One was a Harvard junior, John D. (Jay) Rockefeller, who was just back from study in Japan. Bernie had met him in an economics course. On another occasion, Carl invited John Conway, a house master and

<sup>103</sup>Fr. Cheesman returned to Peru in 1962, helped lay the foundations for the Letters College of the new University of Piura, and become one of its first faculty members (1969). His research concentrated on the poetry of the notable Peruvian writer and dramatist Abraham Valdelomar (1888-1919). Fr. Genua went on to San Francisco in 1965 to help begin the apostolate of Opus Dei in California; from there he moved to New York (1968) and Puerto Rico (1970, as counselor) before returning to Spain (1990), where he died late in 2009.

<sup>104</sup>JL. Fr. Flader adds: "Mine was a tightly packed room with at least five others". Fortunato's story is told in GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 109-110.

professor of history, the most decorated Canadian veteran of World War II, to relate his experiences”<sup>105</sup>.

Other visitors in the fall semester included Fr. José María Albareda, an early member of the Work, a research scholar serving as the second rector of the university in Pamplona. His travel companion was Luis Garrido, who (as Louie) had played a large part in helping start the Boston apostolate in the early 1950s.<sup>106</sup> David Sell came from Milwaukee to immerse himself for several months in Japanese language and culture prior to his departure for Japan in May<sup>107</sup>. Subsequently he followed the regular doctoral program at the University of Kyoto and was the principal agent in opening Opus Dei’s student center there (Yoshida). Carlos Cavallé visited the Harvard Business School in advance of a delegation from IESE, the business school of the University of Navarre in Barcelona; this was the beginning of a long collaboration between the two schools.

Besides the study/sports weekends at Wynnview, Elmbrook’s residents began visiting a prep school in Harrisville, N.H., recently opened by Carl Schmitt’s older brother, John, that eventually became the Trivium School. Sometimes Fr. Genua and Fr. Rieman gave mini-retreats for staff and students, followed by sports. Hilary Mahaney and his friends in Maine continued to receive visitors from Cambridge.

### *Spring Surprises*

In spring 1961 Elmbrook was “a beehive” of activity, extending to the apostolate in the universities. Joe Atkinson began a formation class in an M.I.T. undergraduate residence. Early in January, Pancho Rivero noticed at weekday Mass in St. Paul’s Church a new arrival who looked “very British”. Rivero approached him one day and said in the best English he could manage, “I say, are you British?” The bark of an answer confirmed that suspicion,

<sup>105</sup>JL. Rockefeller had spent 3 years in Tokyo studying Japanese; he received his Harvard B.A. (Far Eastern Languages and History) in 1961. After Peace Corps and VISTA, he embarked on a public service career—state (Governor of West Virginia, 1978-86) and national (U.S. Senate).

<sup>106</sup>Fr. Albareda (1902-1966) was already acquiring prestige in agricultural chemistry when he met the Founder of Opus Dei in 1935 and on Oct. 24, 1937 became one of the first members. After a distinguished academic career as head of Spain’s principal scientific institution, he was ordained a priest in 1959. For Garrido, see GUEGUEN, *The Early Days*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>107</sup>See JL.

whereupon Rivero admitted his Venezuelan origin and invited Yorkshireman Robert Harland Jackson, Ph.D. to Elmbrook. Before long he was in a circle. He had come to Harvard with a grant to do post-graduate studies in chemistry with Professor E. Bright Wilson, Jr.

As the weeks passed, he seemed to resonate more and more with the spirit of the house. Then one day he mentioned that his post-doc was a traveling grant; he would complete the Harvard portion at the end of February and move on to Ottawa, Ontario, where Opus Dei had no presence. In light of this news, Bob was asked to consider whether he might be called to Opus Dei. He took a few days to reflect on so serious a proposition, made his decision, canceled the arrangement in Ottawa, and extended his stay at Harvard<sup>108</sup>.

In March, Villegas, Paterno, and other Philippine students helped Placido (Cidito) Mapa, Jr. organize a *Fiesta Filipina* that took place in M.I.T.'s Kresge Auditorium. Students at the universities in the Boston area took part. Half of the proceeds went to Elmbrook's oratory fund. On March 19 there was a feast of a different kind at Elmbrook when Trimount residents came over to join Elmbrook in celebrating the feast of St. Joseph with solemn Mass and a song-filled get-together. "There was scarcely room for everyone"<sup>109</sup>. This was about to be remedied, as the oratory construction was beginning.

June commencement ceremonies at M.I.T. were especially festive since the Institute was observing its centennial. Among the graduates were Rico Fortunato, John Layter, and Joe Martins.

<sup>108</sup>RY. After Harvard, Jackson found his "niche" in secondary education, and remained in the U.S. the rest of his days. As director of Trimount House (1965-1971) he introduced the Special Studies Program for high school students. In 1971 he was appointed headmaster of The Heights, a prep school in Washington, where he remained until 1987. Thereupon he returned to Boston to direct the work with married members and cooperators at Chestnut Hill. Born in the north of England in 1933, Jackson set a high standard of professional achievement as teacher and scholar and left as his principal legacy a unique style of teacher-student relations. He is especially remembered for his sense of humor and patience. In the late '90s he was treated for a series of cancers that brought his life to a close early in 2001.

<sup>109</sup>BV; see *Crónica*, mayo 1961, pp. 51f (AGP, P01); AGP, *Crónica*, diciembre 1961, p. 63 (AGP, P01). Mapa met Opus Dei in St. Louis as a graduate student in 1956. He took part in the apostolate at the Ambassador Hotel and asked for admission to Opus Dei as the first Filipino supernumerary in 1960. Among the other students, Antonio Ozaeta (former assistant to Fr. Porrás at the Business School) and Leon Gonzáles (translator of *The Way* into Tagalog) also became supernumeraries (BV).

## SUMMER AND FALL 1961

### *Dedication of the Oratory*

In the summer, Bob Yoest completed the philosophy program of the center of studies and returned to Trimount to begin four years as director. John Layter and Greg Haddock prepared to enter the Roman College at the end of July with Chicagoan Jack Kubeck<sup>110</sup>. Bob Bucciarelli, one of the first to meet Opus Dei in Boston, returned as Fr. Bob with encouragement from the Founder<sup>111</sup>. With each passing year, Harvard and M.I.T. graduates were departing for Rome and other places in the world. So far two had returned from Rome: Fr. Rieman and now Fr. Bucciarelli.

Mike Curtin, the first numerary at Harvard (1955) was ordained in Spain that summer, returned to Rome to complete his doctorate, and came back to the United States in 1964 after a year of pastoral experience in Spain. He spent six years at Woodlawn Residence in Chicago before returning to a radically changed Cambridge in 1970. During his years in Rome he accompanied St. Josemaría and his first successor to London for two months in the summers of 1959 and 1960 where they worked and stimulated the apostolate. Fr. Curtin left on record his recollections of those special months<sup>112</sup>.

It took Menzies (then employed by John M. Gray in Boston) and his crew six months to complete the Elmbrook annex. The oratory was blessed Oct. 2, 1961<sup>113</sup>. Bishop Riley consecrated the altar and celebrated Mass for a large gathering of friends. In the homily, he spoke of the Work's presence in Cambridge:

<sup>110</sup>See JL, RY. Yoest went to the Roman College in 1965.

<sup>111</sup>Msgr. Bucciarelli's reminiscences of the first years in Boston and prospects for the future are in *Crónica*, febrero 1962, pp. 28-32 (AGP, P01). The article is accompanied by several group photos.

<sup>112</sup>Lawrence Michael Curtin was born in 1935 in Steubenville, Ohio, and spent most of his early life in southern California. Following ordination he completed a doctorate in theology at the Lateran University (1962). After 30 years of priestly work, primarily among university students in Chicago and Cambridge, James Cardinal Hickey appointed him director of the Catholic Information Center (downtown Washington) in 1992. He died of heart failure in 1999. Cfr. *Romana: Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei*, 15 (1999), p. 134. His contemporaries remember "his infectious smile" and good-natured quips—"a typical Californian: mellow and laid-back. He studied hard but never gave the impression of being a bookworm. He loved family life, get-togethers, and especially the singing on feast days" (PD).

<sup>113</sup>See HS.

We older residents of this area recall that in the past something like this house could hardly be imagined. We rejoice to live at a time when the Church can make this kind of impact—not in a spectacular or contentious way, but simply by being faithful to what we believe, witnesses to Christ among the people around us. What a wonderful Work of God is done here every time Holy Mass is celebrated. No one leaves this oratory unchanged<sup>114</sup>.

During the reception, Bishop Riley commented on the number of nationalities present, and told anecdotes about the beginning of the Work in the Boston area. He was given a copy of a new American edition of *The Way*<sup>115</sup>.

### *Fall Newcomers*

That fall, Bernie Villegas met a new student in Harvard's doctoral program in economics, Jesús (Jess) Estanislao, a Fulbright scholar who had spent the previous year in New York completing his masters at Fordham University. Shortly after his introduction to Elmbrook, Estanislao began to consider a calling to Opus Dei: "I had no idea what a meditation was, but out of courtesy I decided to attend. What struck me most on that first visit to Elmbrook was the international environment, the cheerfulness of people I had not met before, and the naturalness of the priests. I returned soon after to help work on the oratory, and after an excursion in October started speaking with a priest"<sup>116</sup>.

Estanislao asked for admission before the semester ended and moved to the center the following summer. When he and Villegas returned to Manila several years later, they initiated a Center for Research and Communication (CRC) that became Opus Dei's first corporate work of apostolate in the Philippines. It soon began making significant contributions to the expertise and moral formation of officials in charge of the country's political economy. Later it became the first stone of the University of Asia and the Pacific<sup>117</sup>.

<sup>114</sup>*Crónica*, agosto 1962, pp. 70-72 (AGP, P01).

<sup>115</sup>Chicago, Scepter, 1961.

<sup>116</sup>JE; see BV.

<sup>117</sup>Estanislao has served as executive director of CRC (1969-1981) and founding president of UAP (1992-1997). In public service, he rehabilitated the Development Bank of the Philippines (1986-1989) and oversaw the country's economic recovery and reform as Finance Secretary in the Aquino administration (1989-1992). He became president and CEO of the

Toward the end of the semester, Villegas and Estanislao encountered an American student who had discontinued the practice of the Catholic faith. “He was defending himself because what the Church teaches, he said, ‘no longer produces saints’. Jess assured him that he would change his mind if he started coming to Elmbrook”.<sup>118</sup> Many students were attending Friday night lecture-discussions that brought to the house professors of government, economics, literature, and journalism. These “evenings of conversation” became a fruitful instrument of apostolate and of cultural formation not only at Elmbrook but in Opus Dei’s student centers throughout the country<sup>119</sup>.

In December Fr. Escribano, living in Montréal since October 1959, spent several weeks at Elmbrook in convalescence. “A few years later”, Joe Atkinson recalls, “we learned about his authenticated cure from lung cancer through the intercession of Isidoro [Zorzano]. Although the cancer had disappeared when the surgery took place, a period of recovery followed what turned out to be an unnecessary procedure; he spent this time with us”<sup>120</sup>.

## EPILOGUE

This article and the previous one on the earlier years have provided glimpses of what St. Josemaría called “the history of God’s ways among men” as it unfolded when members of Opus Dei arrived in Boston and Cambridge<sup>121</sup>. Their successors and the young men they introduced to the apostolate—first at Harvard and M.I.T.—were from countries far and near (Australia, the Philippines, England, Spain, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Canada) and from cities and towns in fifteen states from coast to coast within the United States (from Maine to California and North Dakota to North Carolina). These young men, each in his own way, discovered a unifying meaning for their lives in the family of Opus Dei through the prayer and sacrifice of dedicated mentors. After spending a few years in Boston and Cambridge, most of them went to distant places in the United

Institute of Corporate Directors in 1999. Villegas, co-founder of CRC and dean of the UAP School of Economics, writes on development economics for Asian journals.

<sup>118</sup>*Crónica*, enero 1962, pp. 77-80 (AGP, P01).

<sup>119</sup>See *Crónica*, diciembre 1961, pp. 62-64 (AGP, P01).

<sup>120</sup>JA.

<sup>121</sup>For a synopsis of this history, see John COVERDALE, *Putting down Roots: Father Joseph Muzquiz and the Growth of Opus Dei*, New York, Scepter, 2009, pp. 81-84.

States and beyond—some after spending time in Rome at the side of the Founder of Opus Dei.

It was a fruitful beginning, through the prayers of St. Josemaría, and the hard work of those who received and passed along his spirit. As the story of the initial apostolate at the universities in Cambridge closed, the same story extended to other schools in the area: Northeastern, Boston College, Boston University...<sup>122</sup>. The next period, 1962-1972, included the opening of a conference center (Arnold Hall) on Boston's south shore, the final years of Trimount House, and the expansion of the apostolate to a new center in suburban Chestnut Hill. Those years witnessed a dramatic transition in student life and intellectual culture, the context for Opus Dei's apostolate.

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<sup>122</sup>Already, two Boston high school students who would attend Boston University (Ron Gillis) and Boston College (Jim Stenson) had met Opus Dei and were taking part in the apostolate.