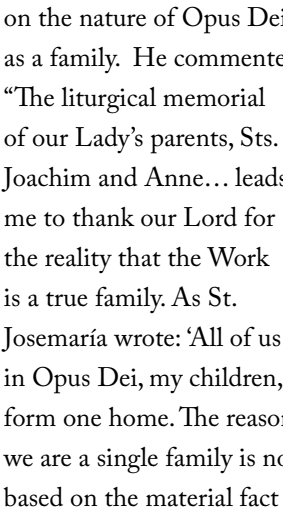


From the Prelate:
"The Work Is A Family"



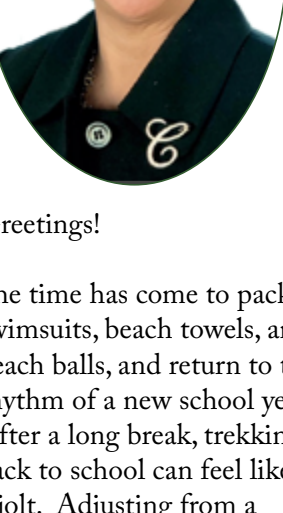
In a recent letter, the prelate of Opus Dei, Mgr. Fernando Ocariz, reflected on the nature of Opus Dei as a family. He commented, "The liturgical memorial of our Lady's parents, Sts. Joachim and Anne... leads me to thank our Lord for the reality that the Work is a true family. As St. Josemaría wrote: 'All of us in Opus Dei, my children, form one home. The reason we are a single family is not based on the material fact of living under the same roof. Like the first Christians, we are *cor unum et anima una* (Acts 4:32)...' (Letter 11, no. 23)."

Ocariz continued, "For all of us to live with one heart and one soul, it is essential that any concern of our brothers or sisters be truly our own.... When we meditate on how Christ died for us, we see a love that knows no conditions and that leads us to give our own life for our brothers and sisters."

The prelate concluded his comments on the family of Opus Dei with a quote from Pope Leo XIV: "Jesus shows us the meaning of authentic love for God and for others. It is a love that is generous, not possessive; a love that forgives without question; a love that reaches out and never abandons others" (Leo XIV, Angelus, 13 June 2025).

Thank you, Lord, for the family of the Work!

President's Letter



Greetings!

The time has come to pack up swimsuits, beach towels, and beach balls, and return to the rhythm of a new school year. After a long break, reeking back to school can feel like a jolt. Adjusting from a relaxed summer schedule to a structured school day can trigger stress and worries about homework, looming exams, pressure to excel, and keeping up with peers. One can feel rusty and anxious, easing back into study mode.

Every new school year is a blank slate, a chance to grow and discover many new things. Studying isn't just about memorizing facts or passing exams. It's about building the skills and mindset that shape one's future. As the saying goes, knowledge is power. Whether it's science, literature, or history, all learning helps us make sense of life and prepare us for real world challenges. Study prepares us for life, for service, and for holiness.

To St. Josemaría, study was not just an academic duty, but a spiritual calling. He emphasized that study, when done with love and intention, becomes a way to encounter God. It's not just about books—it's about sanctifying time and effort. In another work, a student needs to study with purpose and love. In *Parroco* #526, St. Josemaría wrote, "One has to study...to gain the world and conquer it for God. Then we can raise the level of our efforts: we can try to turn the work we do into an encounter with the Lord."

Inspired by his teaching, here are some habits a student can cultivate:

- *Start with a prayer:*
Offer your study time to God.
- *Stay disciplined:*
Avoid procrastination and distractions.
- *Seek excellence:*
Work not for pride, but to serve others better.
- *Stay joyful:*
Even in hard moments, remember your effort has eternal value.

Good study habits lead to better grades, which can open doors to scholarships, college opportunities, and dream careers, but when done with purpose and love, they can bring one to the ultimate dream and destination of eternal life.

Cynthia Abesa
President,
Walnut Grove
Board of Directors

* UPCOMING EVENTS:

*Click the activity title for links to more information

FOR WOMEN:

Monthly Recollections*
Pasadena • Orange County • Long Beach • Camarillo
San Diego • Las Vegas, NV • Phoenix, AZ

Retreats*
October 17-19, 2025
November 7-9, 2025
Mary and Joseph Retreat Center
5300 Crest Road, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

Faith & Reason Class*
First Saturdays of the month
1:00p - 3:30p
Beverly Cultural Center

FOR DAUGHTERS:

These programs meet Saturdays 1000 - 3:30p
Aster Study Center

6th - 7th grades **Creative Cuisine***
8th grade **Stitch & Design***
9th - 10th grades **Stepping Up***
11th - 12th grades **College Prep***

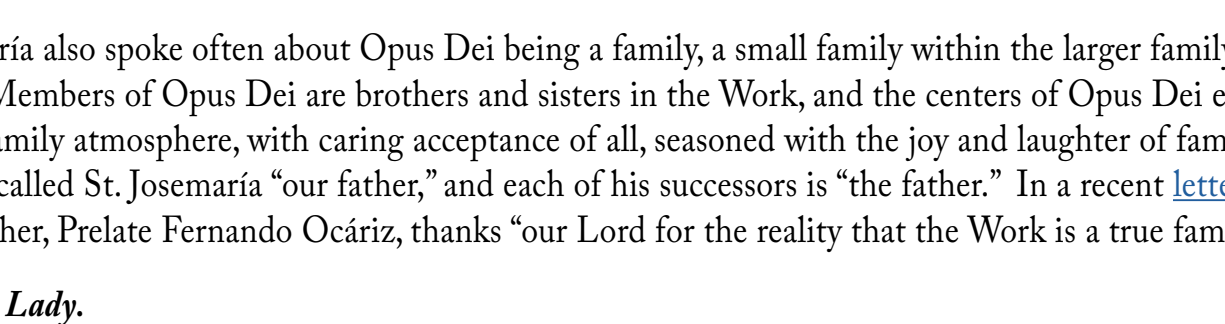
Both programs teach practical skills while instilling confidence and a spirit of service.
Mentoring, discussion forums, and skill development
Guidance in applying for college and preparing for college life

Retreats*
9th - 10th grades
October 24 - 26, 2025
11th - 12th grades
March 13 - 15, 2025 (during Lent)

Catholic in College*
Meditations, retreats, pilgrimages and more at Westfield Residence* near the main UCLA campus.

Family, Coincidences, and Our Lady

There are no coincidences as far as God is concerned, and there are *definitely* no coincidences in this story. Many people have been following the stirring account of the recent deaths of three men in Opus Dei while hiking in a remote area of northern California. On June 18, 2025, Val Creus drowned at Rattlesnake Falls, as well as two others, Matt Schoenecker and Matt Anthony, who died while trying to save him. But this story starts earlier, long before that sad day.



Matt S., 50

Val, 59

Matt A., 44

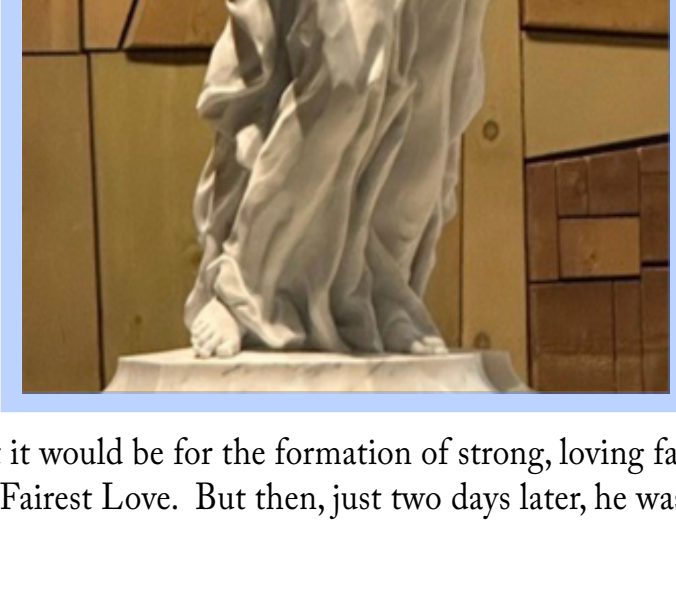
St. Josemaría had often spoken about his devotion to [Mary, Mother of Fairest Love](#). He hoped that there would be a way for families to gather and pray to her for their families, to seek her guidance as intercessor for all their family needs. Families of all types could petition her help, including young, growing families; older families dealing with age-related issues; couples preparing for marriage; youth discerning vocations; and families in crisis, facing illness, addiction, death, or the loss of faith of a loved one.

Mary, show us you are our mother.

St. Josemaría also spoke often about Opus Dei being a family, a small family within the larger family of the Church. Members of Opus Dei are brothers and sisters in the Work, and the centers of Opus Dei exude a palpable family atmosphere, with caring acceptance of all, seasoned with the joy and laughter of family fun. Members called St. Josemaría "our father," and each of his successors is "the father." In a recent [letter](#), the current father, Prelate Fernando Ocariz, thanks "our Lord for the reality that the Work is a true family."

Enter Our Lady.

The majestic marble statue of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, arrived in Los Angeles on June 16, after a long journey from Carrara, Italy, where she was carved. Val Creus, a member of the Fairest Love Family Project committee, had worked tirelessly for years in the effort to have the statue crafted, and more importantly, to spread devotion to Our Lady under the title Mother of Fairest Love. It was a crowning moment of great joy to finally see the seven-and-a-half-foot tall statue arrive in the City of the Angels, and then watch as she was ever so gently installed in St. Louise De Merillac Church in Covina. Val jubilantly shared this photo of the statue in the church with his younger sister on June 16. He knew, after years of mentoring married men



in Opus Dei, how important it would be for the formation of strong, loving families to have the help and protection of the Mother of Fairest Love. But then, just two days later, he was dead, along with the men who tried to save him.

After days of adverse weather conditions at Rattlesnake Falls, police divers had not been able to recover the bodies of the three men. On June 20, officials announced that because of strong winds, it could be days or weeks until they were found. Devastated by the loss of three of our brothers and aching to bring their bodies home, the family of the Work was united in praying for the souls of Val, Matt, and Matt, as well as for the recovery of their bodies.

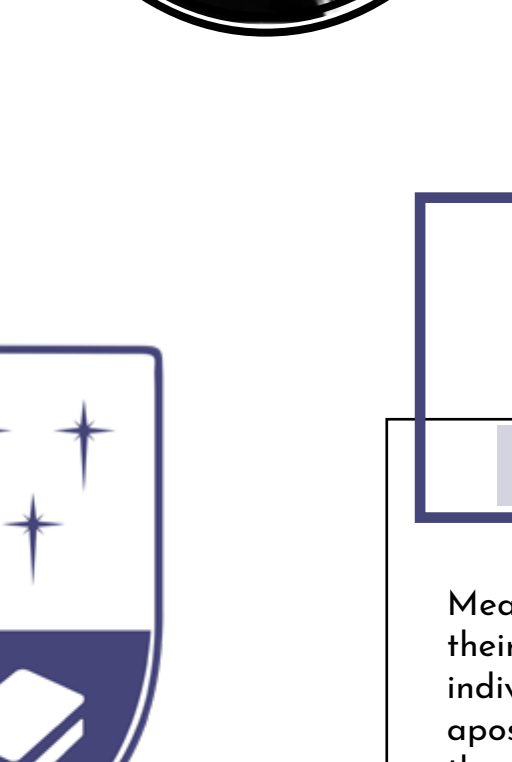
Mary, show us you are our Mother.

After spending an hour of intense prayer in front of the statue of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, a member of the Work contacted independent diver [Juan Heredia](#), and he recovered the bodies on June 21. Despite having injured his ankle during an earlier recovery, Heredia and an assistant carried his equipment to Rattlesnake Falls on a grueling 4-hour hike through rain, hail, and lightning. Then, during four three-minute dives, he found and recovered the bodies from the bottom of the waterfall, under 45 feet of water. Remember, there are no coincidences as far as God is concerned.

St. Josemaría knew that families needed the help and support of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love. And just days after she arrived in Los Angeles, her family of the Work, that small family inside the larger family of the Church, needed her desperately. Mary, our loving mother, wasted no time in advancing her mission of aiding families in all their needs.

Mary, thank you for showing us that you are our Mother!

~ Jane Reckart



The Quotable Saint · Holiness in Ordinary Life

Study. Study in earnest. If you are to be salt and light, you need knowledge, ability...

St. Josemaría Escrivá
The Way, 340

Meadows Academy:
It's a Launch!

Education for Girls, 9th - 4th grade in Camarillo

Meadows Academy seeks to accompany parents in the holistic development of their daughters through a high-quality, personalized education that nurtures their individual talents and personalities. Our educational initiative is born out of an apostolic desire to encapsulate the spirit of St. Josemaría in academic formation through an authentic single-sex model and an innovative bilingual curriculum. Our core values of work, friendship, family, and service guide every decision we make.

We are delighted to announce that we are launching in the Fall of 2025 with an initial group of 7 families and 12 girls. We will be supported by two outstanding teachers and a teacher aide, and for now, we are building the school through a homeschooling platform.

If you are interested in learning more about Meadows Academy or registering your daughters, please feel free to contact me at luca.marquez@meadowsacademy.com. Please note that our website is currently private. We are very excited about the future of Meadows Academy!

~ Lucia Marquez

On My Bedside Table

Hannah's Children

by Catherine Ruth Pakaluk

As the mother of nine, I was excited to read "Hannah's Children" by Catherine Ruth Pakaluk, a Harvard graduate, an associate professor, and a mother of eight herself. Pakaluk interviewed women across the US who are raising five or more children. She sought "to understand who they are, why they choose to have a large family, and what this countercultural choice means for them, their families, and the nation."

The author found that women have larger than average families are not motivated by economic factors as much as by the intangible benefits of a large family. The mothers interviewed in this book believed that the children themselves are the biggest beneficiaries of their sometimes heroic decision to have a large family.

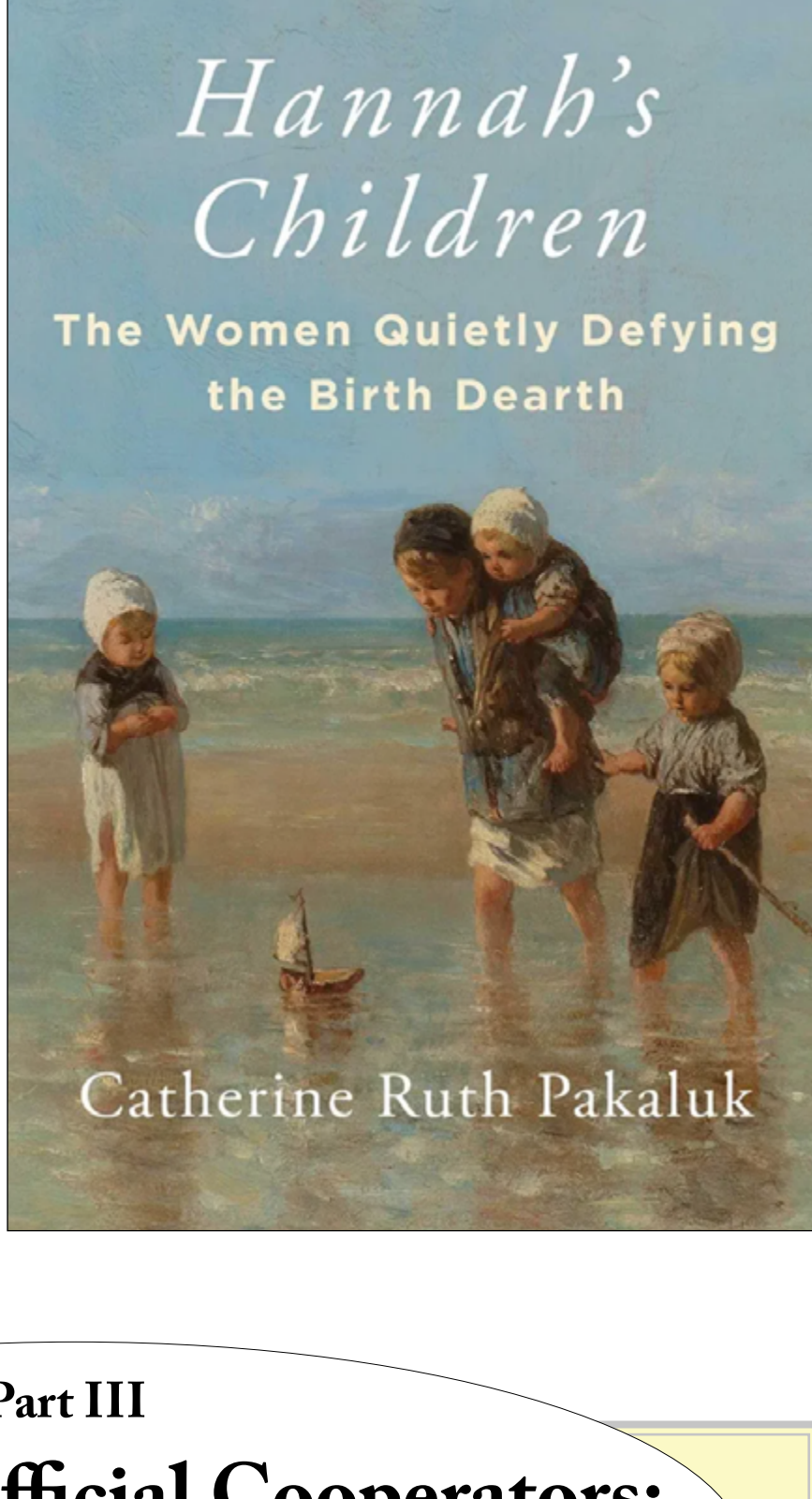
Many of the interviewees remarked on how their children inherently feel needed and useful in the context of a large family. One mother noted that children who contribute at home feel much more positive and those positives more than make up for any material deprivations they may suffer. An interviewee, a mother of nine, shared, "You don't really need much when you have a big family, because you have each other and that overfills the cup, so to speak."

The author notes that the virtues acquired and required in the context of a large family - concern for the common good, spirit of service, empathy, toleration - could very well be the needed solution to today's social ills. All these good habits - virtues - that are acquired within a family, and within a large family almost without trying, are precisely the virtues required to create a society where humanity, especially the neediest, can flourish.

Another interviewee observed, "We don't even understand what the good is anymore. And it's hard to reach after the good, but it's almost impossible if you don't even know where the good lies."

No matter what size family you have, this is a great book to read because it identifies, naturally and organically through individual stories and experiences, the "good" that we are aiming for as we raise our children.

~ J.B.



Part III

The First Unofficial Cooperators:

Among the Sick

Visits to the sick built up a "spiritual reservoir" that was necessary for the initial growth of Opus Dei.

St. Josemaría visited and cared for the sick, many of whom were dying of tuberculosis, during the early years of Opus Dei. These visits to the sick built up a "spiritual reservoir" that was necessary for the initial growth of Opus Dei, thanks to the many prayers and offerings that the sick made for Fr. Josemaría's "intention."

In the early 1930s, when Fr. Josemaría (as he was known) worked in the hospitals of Madrid, he was also working on the beginnings of Opus Dei. Little by little, God helped him see through experience that in those early days he should focus primarily on university students, who, due to their youth and personal qualities, could form a first nucleus of growth on which the full breadth of the Work would later be based. "He began in his mother's house. Without material or human means: ... However, he trusted in God and continued dreaming of the apostolic work of the members of Opus Dei, the spreading throughout all the countries of the world, ... in service to the Church; on the great American steppes, in the ancient European cities, on the islands of Asia, on the plains of Africa, and in distant and exotic Japan..." Cejas, J.M., *José María Somoano en los comienzos del Opus Dei*, Rialp, Madrid 1995, page 112.

St. Josemaría reminisced: "When I went to celebrate [Mass] every morning at the [hospital], Patronage of Saint Elizabeth, I would encounter a beggar who was always in the same place, on the street, begging for alms. I approached her and said: 'My daughter, I cannot give you gold or silver; I, a poor priest of God, give you what I have: the blessing of God the Almighty Father. And I ask you to commend one of my intentions, which will be for the great glory of God and the good of souls. Give to the Lord all you can!'

"A short time later, I met this beggar in one of the rooms [at the hospital]. 'My daughter, what are you doing here? What's wrong with you?' She looked at me and smiled. 'She was seriously ill. I told her: "Tomorrow I will celebrate Mass, asking the Lord to make you well." The beggar replied: 'Father, you told me to entrust something that was for the great glory of God and to give everything I could to the Lord: I have offered Him what I have, my life.'"

"I tell you," the Founder commented, "that it was from the moment that that poor beggar woman went to Heaven, that the spiritual point of view, to be the first female vocation of Opus Dei. Relación testimonial de Florentina Cano Aranda, Madrid 4.XI.1975 (AGP, RHF T-04913). Reference 40 from Cejas, J.M., *José María Somoano en los comienzos del Opus Dei*, Rialp, Madrid 1995, page 233.

~ Jazmir Fajardo

reaping treasure from the opus dei universe

The Work strives to support and appreciate every person's unique call to holiness, whether that's in the Work, adjacent to the Work, or not in the Work at all.

Reflections on
"One by One: Stories of Life In Opus Dei"

If you're exploring like me, when friends ask about Opus Dei and what the Work is about, you may get a little tongue-tied. And while we've likely rehearsed our explanations of vocations or sanctifying ordinary life countless times, (I feel) nothing demonstrates the fruits of Opus Dei better than the lives of the people in the Work.

The Opus Dei website's *One By One*, a collection of stories about members of the Work throughout the world, does exactly this, highlighting the beauty (and diversity) of lives lived following St. Josemaría's example.

This collection features individuals with a range of professions, personalities, and ages – from gastronomists to musicians to architects. And while every person has very positive things to say about the Work, some disclose that they're no longer a part of it, or that they started as a numerary or numerary assistant but ultimately discovered that was not their vocation.

What's unique about this collection is that it showcases the freedom these people enjoy as they pursue their life's paths – a liberty that comes from their dignity as children of God. Far from gaining as many "recruits" as possible, the Work strives to support and appreciate every person's unique call to holiness, whether that's in the Work, adjacent to the Work, or (even) not in the Work at all.

As an aspiring chef (currently a pastry cook) myself, it was helpful to see stories like Shirō's – a caterer from Kenya. Like me, she pursued a career change driven by a desire to serve others and make them happy.

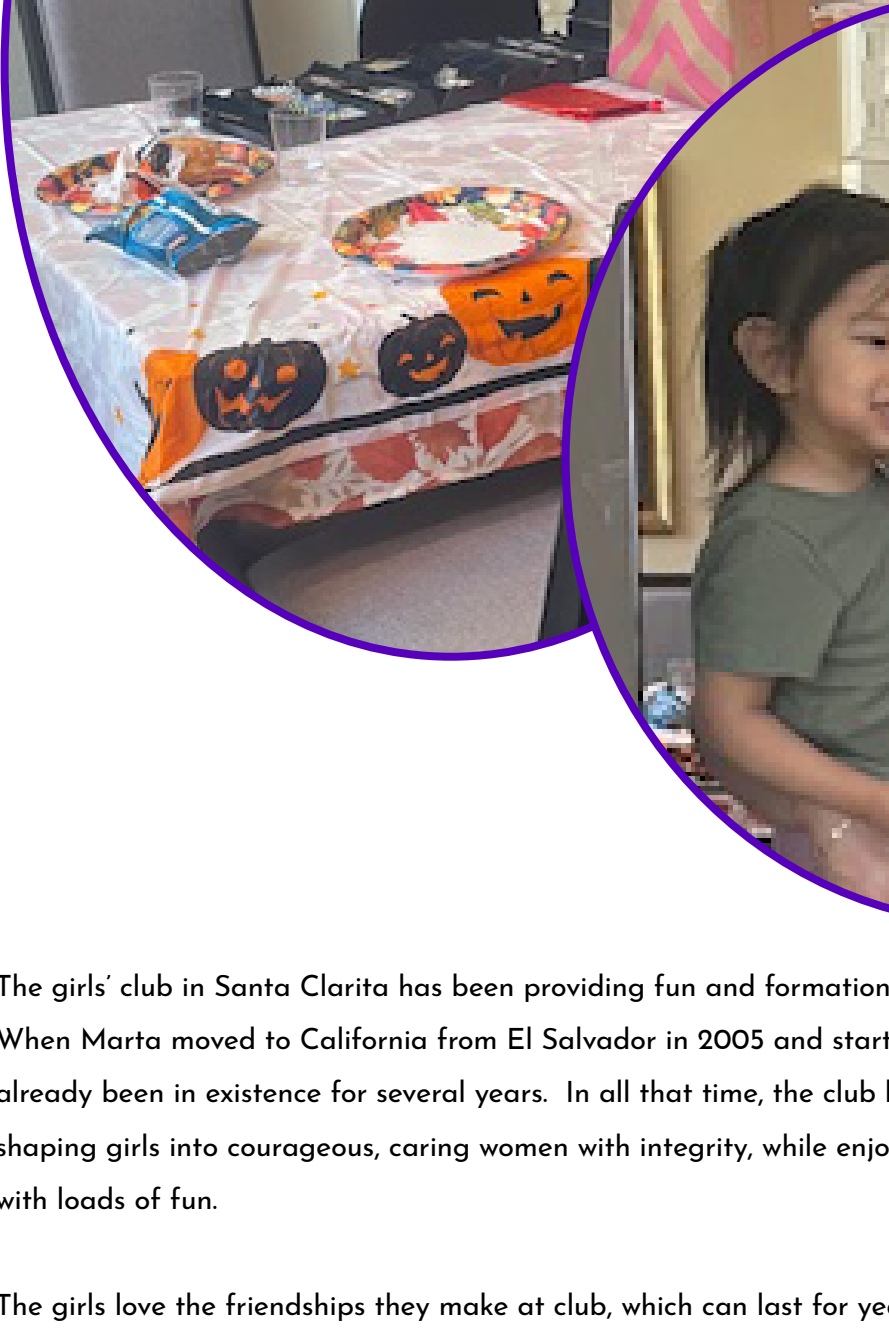
In the past, I've been inspired to lead those who are curious about the Work to the "about" section of the website. But I now think that seeing the real human beings living in the Work – all with different perspectives – is one of the best ways to illustrate what Opus Dei is and what it means to us.

~ Anna Livia Brady



Santa Clarita Girls' Club
– Clearly Great for Girls!

Girls' Club Corner:



The goals

of the Santa Clarita club are worthwhile, helping the girls in many ways:

-To develop their personalities in a positive way

-To discover their talents through hands-on activities

-To bolster their leadership skills

-To foster their womanhood

The girls' club in Santa Clarita has been providing fun and formation for many more than twenty years. When Marta moved to California from El Salvador in 2005 and started working with the club, it had already been in existence for several years. In all that time, the club has remained true to its mission of shaping girls into courageous, caring women with integrity, while enjoying the smiles and giggles that come with loads of fun.

The girls love the friendships they make at club, which can last for years, even through adulthood. They also really enjoy the crafts, which range from beading to designing wreaths to preparing (and eating!) chocolate flowers. Marta likes the sharing that happens between the girls as their friendships deepen. Additionally, she is happy that their moms also attend the club meetings, receiving and discussing their own version of the virtue talk that the girls hear. That encourages the moms to practice the same virtue the girls are learning, enabling them to share that growing experience together.

Clearly, the Santa Clarita Girls' Club is preparing these girls to be principled women who will lead with compassion wherever they go!