

Letters of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri
to Saint Josemaría Escrivá

LETTERS TO A SAINT

Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri

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To the Reader

When was the last time you had a letter from a friend? Maybe you get more excited about your email inbox or social network messages than a handwritten letter. You don't have to open an envelope or unfold a page to read what your friend is confiding to you – just a click and you get it all converted into pixels. But whether handwritten or digital, have you ever had a message from someone who laid bare their soul in what they wrote to you?

These extracts from letters written by Guadalupe Ortiz to St Josemaria Escriva reflect the soul of a woman who learned to find God in the middle of the world. Guadalupe opened her heart and soul to St Josemaria, whom she always called “Father”. The letters were written by someone who was convinced that Heaven was her destiny and the world was her path there.

In 1944, when Guadalupe, a chemistry teacher, first met St Josemaria, she discovered that God was offering her a path to holiness in the middle of the world, through her professional work. A few months after that encounter, she wrote him a letter beginning, like all her letters to him from then on, “Father,” in which she asked to join Opus Dei. That was the first of 350 letters that she wrote to him, beginning on 19 March 1944, and ending on 22 June 1975, four days before St Josemaria died in Rome.

Those 350 letters containing thousands of words were written by hand to a saint. Guadalupe wrote to St Josemaria regularly for just over thirty years. She did not expect any reply, because all she wanted to do was to open her soul to him, showing herself as she was, in total sincerity and trust. In her letters she freely related everything to do with her spiritual life, very often as the outcome of a time spent in mental prayer. “In my prayer, in the letters I write to you, and when I talk to Don Pedro, I unburden myself of everything that worries me, and then I feel so much lighter and ready to take whatever Our Lord may lay on

my shoulders,”¹ Guadalupe confessed in one of her letters from Mexico. Her letters were written as naturally as a daughter writing to her father, with the simplicity that came from having shared her confidences with God in prayer. Guadalupe asked for light and prayers from the saint who had received a special grace from God to open up a new path to holiness in the world. “I write to you, Father, so that, as usual, you can continue getting to know me in depth, helping me and praying for me.”²

More than 40 years have gone by since Guadalupe wrote the last of her letters to St Josemaria, and only now are we beginning to realize what a treasure they contain. From our standpoint, we can look back and read them in a new light: they are words written by a saint to a saint. St Josemaria’s canonization in 2002, and Guadalupe’s forthcoming beatification on 18 May 2019, confirm that the light which God entrusted to St Josemaria when he was just a young priest from Barbastro is not only for a small group of people but for all Christians, in the most varied situations of life and work.

Guadalupe understood that this path to holiness through everyday work and ordinary life was the way along which God was calling her, and so her letters are a great help for Christians who are seeking to love God in the middle of the world. In her letters, Guadalupe reveals how to live face-to-face with God amidst everyday occupations, so that the extracts collected in this book can help people to pray. As we read what Guadalupe wrote we understand that saints are people of flesh and blood, and we feel encouraged to ask for help, like her, on our path to Heaven.

This selection from Guadalupe’s letters to St Josemaria is published in the hope that, like her, we may all learn to find God in the most ordinary circumstances of our everyday lives.

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Preface

This book includes a selection of extracts from letters sent by Guadalupe to St Josemaria, which he kept with other personal documents. They are now in the General Archive of the Opus Dei Prelature (henceforward AGP), in the section of items related to Guadalupe Ortiz de Landazuri (GOL, from her initials). They are letters written with the naturalness that comes of belonging to the same family, each of them reflecting the spontaneity of a confidence made by a daughter to her father.

In June 2018 Pope Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints to publish a decree approving a miracle attributed to Guadalupe's intercession. This opened the way to her being beatified, and brought the spotlight to bear on her in a new way. Msgr Fernando Ocariz, prelate of Opus Dei, said after hearing the news:

“The life of Guadalupe helps us see how giving oneself entirely to Our Lord, responding with generosity to what God asks of us in each moment, allows us to be very happy here on earth and later in Heaven, where we will be happy forever.

I ask Our Lord that the example of Guadalupe will encourage us to be courageous so as to face the big and small things of daily life with enthusiasm and a spirit of initiative, to serve God and others with love and joy.”³

When we read Guadalupe's letters, we were attracted by the testimony they bore to the richness of her devotional life and her love for God, and so we embarked on the project of publishing extracts from them. Other people will write the historical and theological aspects of Guadalupe's life, but we wanted to present these passages as material for prayer. Guadalupe wrote her letters to St Josemaria simply in order to show her soul, which means that many people can find them useful in opening up their own souls to God.

With that aim in mind we chose passages from Guadalupe's letters that show the "great holiness" which, in St Josemaria's words, "is contained in the 'little duties' of every moment."⁴ Guadalupe found that great holiness in her ambition to love God and other people more every day, in her work, and in everything that went to confirm her in her path and her mission.

We have grouped the passages into five chapters according to five central aspects of Guadalupe's life, which may offer lights for readers' lives too. The letters are given in chronological order within each chapter, though obviously not in the book as a whole.

Notes have been added to clarify or explain some phrases that may be hard to understand in today's context. Sometimes details have been added in square brackets such as the surnames of people referred to in the letters, or other background information. Notes have also been added to explain some terms referring to the spiritual life and the customs of the times, used by Guadalupe in her historical and cultural context, which could obscure the meaning they were intended to convey. All of these notes, together with the AGP register numbers, are collected at the end of the book, rather than at the foot of each page, so as not to slow up the reading of the letters themselves.

For those who wish to know a little more about Guadalupe's life and the context of each of the letters, we offer in the following pages a short profile of her, and a timeline of some of the important moments in her life.

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Guadalupe Ortiz: a profile

Guadalupe's full name was Guadalupe Ortiz de Landazuri. She was born in Madrid on December 12, 1916, the fourth and last child of Manuel and Eulogia Ortiz, who suffered the loss of their youngest son that same year.

When Guadalupe was eleven her father, an army commander, was posted to Tetuan, in what was then the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco. Guadalupe began her secondary schooling there. She was the only girl in her class, and she stood out for her high marks, daring and leadership qualities. During this period she fell ill with rheumatic fever. Although she made a full recovery, the illness left her with a weakened heart which would become apparent years later.

In 1932 the family returned to Madrid, Spain. Guadalupe finished her secondary schooling the following year, and enrolled for a degree course in chemistry at university. In the first-year class she was one of only five girls. At that time in Spain very few girls studied at university, and even fewer followed a profession after they got married. Guadalupe loved science and planned to work as a professional chemist and, in due course, marry and start a family. She had a boyfriend, but was not intending to get married in the near future.

The Spanish Civil War caused her to break off her studies. The worst moment of all for Guadalupe's family was when her father, who by that time was a Lieutenant Colonel, was sentenced to death. Although Guadalupe's brother Eduardo succeeded in negotiating a reprieve, their father refused to go free and leave his men to be shot. Guadalupe, Eulogia and Eduardo spent his last night with him, all of them suffering but serene. The example he set made such a deep impression on Guadalupe that she said later, "I owe my vocation to him." Shortly after Manuel's execution, Guadalupe and Eulogia left Spain in order to re-enter it in the "National" zone, and went to stay in Valladolid.

When the Spanish Civil War ended, Guadalupe taught chemistry for five years in two schools in Madrid. She was now 27. One day at Mass, she felt strongly urged to come closer to God. As she left the church she confided to a friend that she needed to consult a good priest, and the friend recommended Fr Josemaria Escriva. Guadalupe went to see him for the first time on January 25, 1944, and their talk made such a deep impression on her that, as she said years later, “the scales fell from my eyes.” Soon afterwards she did a spiritual retreat, in the course of which she discovered her vocation to Opus Dei. On March 19 she joined the Work as a Numerary member.⁵

Guadalupe moved into the first women’s centre of Opus Dei, and applied herself fully to the catering and housekeeping work in students’ halls of residence run by people of Opus Dei – La Moncloa in Madrid, and afterwards Abando in Bilbao – even though she was not naturally gifted for that kind of work. She was especially concerned to improve the living conditions of the girls and women who worked with her, and to provide them with thorough all-round education and skills training. She felt “totally at home and very happy in the Work,” as she told the Father – St Josemaria – in her letters, and fell daily more in love with God.

In 1947 she returned to Madrid to work as director of the university students’ residence called Zurbaran. She combined this job with working at the governance of Opus Dei, and continued to keep up with developments in chemistry, spending time studying it when possible, since she had learned from St Josemaria that she should serve God in the middle of the world by making her talents bear fruit. Over the two years 1947 – 1948 she completed four chemistry courses required for her doctorate.

A year later, St Josemaria ask her to move to Mexico with two other women in the Work, to start Opus Dei’s apostolate there. When she got there, in 1950, she enrolled for more courses towards a chemistry doctorate.

Guadalupe lived in Mexico for just six years, but left a deep and lasting mark because of her capacity for work, her self-giving, and her affection. During her time there women of Opus Dei opened their first hall of residence for students in Mexico City (activities they organised there were attended by some well-known figures such as the poet

Ernestina Champourcin, the only woman to belong to the “Generation of ’27” group); they also expanded their apostolate with girls who were not university students, and married women; they opened Opus Dei centres in Culiacan and Monterrey; at the request of the Bishop of Tacambaro they set up training programmes, basic literacy and numeracy classes, and catechetical courses for women agricultural workers; and started up the first Opus Dei conference and retreat centre in Mexico called Montefalco, which soon afterwards expanded to include a girls’ primary and secondary school, a sewing workshop and a hall of residence.

In October 1956 Guadalupe started to suffer from the first symptoms of heart disease following a bite from a poisonous insect which caused a high fever and some kind of malaria. She moved to Rome, Italy, to work with St Josemaria in the central government of Opus Dei, but in December she had a serious heart failure episode. It was discovered that she was suffering from mitral stenosis. She went to Madrid for treatment, and had a heart operation on July 19, 1957. Her convalescence went very well, and she returned to Rome, but on December 29 she again had a severe heart attack.

She moved back to Madrid permanently. In spite of her delicate state of health, she never acted in the least like an invalid. She continued combining work in the governance of Opus Dei and formation of its members, with studying chemistry. She met Piedad de la Cierva, the first woman to work in the Spanish Higher Council of Scientific Research (CSIC). The two of them started a research project on insulating refractories, whose outcome was patented and received the Juan de la Cierva Award, and Guadalupe wrote her doctoral thesis on “Insulating refractories in rice-husk ash.” She defended the thesis in 1965 and obtained her doctorate with very high marks.

A year before this she had started teaching physics in the Ramiro de Maeztu Institute and physics, chemistry and mathematics as Adjunct Professor of Science at the Women’s School of Industrial Sciences. In 1967 she achieved full or tenured professorship. She worked there for a total of eleven years, being highly valued by her students, and became its Deputy Director, after turning down the post of Director on the grounds of ill health. In 1968 she worked on the planning and setting up of the Centre for Study and Research in Domestic Sciences (CEI-

CID), where she was also appointed Deputy Director and lecturer in textile chemistry.

She carried on working until shortly before she died. On June 1, 1975, she was taken into Navarre University Hospital for a possible heart operation. After a month, the doctors decided to go ahead with the operation. It went well, but two weeks later she experienced breathing difficulties which got steadily worse, despite medical treatment. She died on July 16, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, surrendering her life to God with the willingness, serenity and trust that were always her outstanding characteristics.

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Timeline of Guadalupe's life

1916

December 12: Guadalupe is born in Madrid, the third child of Manuel Ortiz de Landazuri and his wife Eulogia (née Fernandez de Heredia).

December 24: She is baptized in the church of St Ildefonso, Madrid.

Her brother Francisco dies that same year, aged 3.

1923

August 31: Guadalupe's father is posted to the Artillery Academy, Segovia, as a teacher, and the whole family moves there with him. She starts school at the Colegio La Emulacion.

1924

May 29, Ascension Thursday: Guadalupe makes her First Holy Communion in Segovia.

1927

Guadalupe's father is posted to the General Headquarters of the Spanish Army in Africa, and the family moves with him to Tetuan in the then Spanish Protectorate of Morocco. There she starts secondary school at Our Lady of the Pillar School run by the Marist Brothers, the only girl in the class.

1928

Aged 12, Guadalupe contracts rheumatic fever. Although she recovers, it gives rise to bacterial endocarditis which causes cardiac insufficiency and heart failure later on.

1932

Guadalupe's father is posted to the Ministry of the Army in Madrid and promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. She continues her high school studies at the Miguel Cervantes Institute in Madrid.

1933

Guadalupe completes her secondary schooling and in October starts studying for a chemistry degree at the Central University, Madrid. Among the first-year students there are only four other girls.

1936

Guadalupe, now 20, is going out with Carlos, a fellow-student of chemistry. She is thinking of marrying but is in no hurry.

July 18: Spanish Civil War begins. Guadalupe has to interrupt her university studies, in which she is doing brilliantly.

September 8

Guadalupe's father, now 55, is shot in the Model Prison in Madrid. His son Eduardo, after endless negotiations, has succeeded in obtaining a pardon for him, but not for his men, and Manuel Ortiz refuses to go free while the others are shot. Guadalupe, her mother and brother, spend the last night of his life with him.

Before the end of 1936 Guadalupe and her mother leave Spain in order to re-enter it in the "National" zone, and go to live in Valladolid.

1940

June: Guadalupe completes her degree and begins teaching in two schools: the Irish School and the French Lycée.

1944

January: After going to Mass one day when she has a special experience of God's closeness, Guadalupe tells a friend she needs to talk to a priest. The friend gives her the telephone number of Fr Josemaria Escriva. Guadalupe calls him and on January 25 she meets him face to

face for the first time, in an Opus Dei centre in Jorge Manrique Street. Years later she will say that on that day “the scales fell from my eyes.”

March 12-17: She attends a spiritual retreat.

March 19: She joins Opus Dei as a Numerary.

May 18, Ascension Thursday: She moves into the Opus Dei Center in Jorge Manrique Street, Madrid.

1945

May 17: Guadalupe moves from Jorge Manrique to La Moncloa hall of residence to work in the housekeeping department

September 16: She moves to Bilbao to work in the catering department of Abando, a newly-opened hall of residence for university students.

1947

September 15: She returns to Madrid and helps set up Zurbaran hall of residence for women university students, and combines the job as director of Zurbaran with working in the Advisory, the central government of Opus Dei.

October: She enrolls for five subjects to study for a chemistry doctorate, and over the next two years takes four exams.

1950

March 5: Guadalupe travels to Mexico to begin Opus Dei's apostolate with women there. She will be Secretary of the Regional Advisory of Mexico. She enrolls for some more of the subjects she needs for her chemistry doctorate.

April 1: Copenhagen, the first hall of residence for women university students, opens in Mexico City.

1951

Opus Dei's apostolate spreads beyond Mexico City to Culiacan and Monterrey. At the request of the Bishop of Tacambaro, Guadalupe sets up projects to help women agricultural workers. These include basic lit-

eracy and numeracy classes in Copenhagen, and, helped by Guadalupe, many of them obtain qualifications.

1952-1956

Guadalupe is bitten or stung by a venomous bug and falls seriously sick, with malarial symptoms and a high fever. Her health is undermined, although she continues working as intensely as before. She and other Opus Dei members find the Montefalco estate and start on reconstructing it as a primary and secondary school for country girls.

1956

October: First symptoms of cardiac insufficiency.

October 24: Guadalupe is appointed vice-secretary of the Central Advisory of Opus Dei in Rome and she moves there from Mexico.

December: At the end of the month she suffers a severe heart attack.

1957

May 19: She travels to Madrid for medical care.

July 19: Guadalupe undergoes an operation for mitral stenosis, in the Immaculate Conception Hospital, Madrid, and appears to make a good recovery.

October 10: She returns to Rome.

December 29: She has another heart attack.

1958

May 12: Guadalupe goes to Madrid for a medical check-up. St Josemaría, concerned about her health and realizing that the climate in Rome is not good for her, asks her to stay in Spain.

1960

Guadalupe meets Piedad de la Cierva, the first woman to work at the Spanish Higher Council of Scientific Research (CSIC), and they start a joint research project on insulating refractories, with a successful out-

come which is patented. Guadalupe is awarded the Juan de la Cierva Prize. She begins work on her doctoral thesis.

1962-1964

Guadalupe teaches physics at the Ramiro de Maeztu Institute, Madrid, as well as her other jobs.

1964

October 1: Guadalupe begins teaching physics, chemistry and math at the Women's School of Industrial Sciences as Adjunct Science Professor.

1965

July 8: Guadalupe defends her chemistry doctoral thesis on "Insulating refractories in rice-husk ash" and is awarded her doctorate with "Outstanding cum laude."

1967

November 29: Guadalupe is appointed Professor of Science at the Women's School of Industrial Sciences.

1968

She helps to plan and set up the Centre for Study and Research in Domestic Sciences (CEICID) where she works as deputy director and teaches textile chemistry.

1974

She is appointed Assistant Director of the Women's School of Industrial Sciences, having been previously offered the post of Director, which she turned down on health grounds.

1975

June 1: Guadalupe travels from Madrid to Pamplona, Spain, where she is taken into the University Hospital for a possible heart operation.

July 1: She undergoes the operation, which is a success, and remains in Intensive Care.

July 14: 4.30 p.m., she develops heart failure which gets progressively worse despite medical help. In the evening she receives the Anointing of the Sick and is moved to the hospital's coronary unit. It becomes clear she is going to die.

July 16: 6.30 in the morning, she dies, on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

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1. WITH HER FEET ON THE GROUND:

Holiness in ordinary life

In June 1949 Guadalupe was working as director of Zurbaran hall of residence for women university students. There were under 7,000 women at university in the whole of Spain at that time, and very few halls of residence for them. The country was suffering from food shortages and it was hard to keep Zurbaran's finances on a sound footing. But Guadalupe rose above the difficulties, and as well as studying how to solve the money problems, she dreamed of increasing the number of places in the residence and of offering more and better formation to the students who lived there. These and other matters, all apparently situated on the human plane, she made the subject of her conversations with God. She did the same throughout her life, in all the different circumstances she found herself in. Guadalupe was an ordinary woman, one of the "next-door neighbour" saints,⁶ who learned how to live with her feet firmly on the ground and her gaze always fixed on Heaven, and to turn every aspect of her life into the raw material of holiness.

*Bilbao, 29 October 1945*⁷

Dear Father,

I'd love to be able to tell you something good, but as usual, there's so little that I'll keep it for the end. As you know, I find it really hard to keep things tidy and in good order – not just my personal things, but the things I'm given to do. Nisa⁸ realizes this, and she wants to teach me how to put everything in its place: she tidies my cupboards etc. I try to keep them like that and to be very careful not to spoil things, but despite all my efforts I messed some things up like getting a stain on the desk and breaking off one of the bed-knobs. And I keep forgetting where I left the keys, so that I sometimes make my sisters⁹ waste their time. I've done lots of other things like that, but I don't get discouraged,

and I think, if God helps me (pray that he will!), I'll manage to correct myself.

When people give me things to do, I put so much interest into them (even more than before) that I'm scared a bit of self-love is creeping in, because when something doesn't work out so well, I get really upset. These past days I've missed out the reading¹⁰ quite a few times – I'm not sure if it was because I didn't have time, or didn't organize my time properly. I'm strongly aware that Our Lord is there beside me, giving me, especially, help in obeying, so that everything I'm told to do seems easy and attractive to me. In the prayer the time seems to fly by – even though I don't actually say much, I don't get distracted and I feel close to him. I really want to make Our Lord happy and to think of nothing but him, but during the day I go for long stretches without saying anything to him. Will he come to live with us in the Tabernacle soon? The other day we were told that he would, and you just can't imagine how I felt – even though I can't fully grasp what it means, it's enough to go crazy for. I'm always very happy and I love the Work more every day.

Bilbao, 11 November 1946 ¹¹

Dear Father,

I tell you everything that worries me and then feel totally at peace. [...] I spend the day praying for what I think is most urgent, and I get the feeling that Our Lord hears me. I'm happy, and when everything looks black I don't get discouraged – and in fact I soon start seeing things in a better light.

This year every day is different and very important, [...] what with running the house (and the difficulty of getting food) and my sisters who aren't yet living the spirit of the Work fully and aren't familiar with the house. [...] All these little things are nothing compared with your worries, and since you always stay calm and happy in spite of them, I try and do the same in order to help you. What's more, I can see that those very crosses are giving me greater awareness of God's presence, and every day I spend less time thinking about myself. That makes me very happy. Only in the oratory do I see my great big defects very clearly, and then I make an act of humility and don't worry any more.

Sometimes I think I should feel more remorse, but I don't; not even the thought of my past faults worries me.

Madrid, 7 June 1949 ¹²

Dear Father,

[...] So far, everyone has been doing very well. I'm sure that they will turn out to be top-quality girls and next academic year we will be able to do some lasting work with them. Zurbaran¹³ is still full of girls. I think most of them don't finish until 20th. [...]

Father, I'd like to be able to multiply my efforts so that everyone can be at ease about all this. I'm praying for that, and doing what I can. [...] We'd also like to enlarge the residence a bit for the next academic year, if we can rent a flat in the Cobian block. It would be great! We'll see, because this year we're not yet breaking even, though just now we asked some people who love us for a little money. [...] But we need to be an asset instead of a liability.

All these things I'm telling you about fill my life, my prayer and everything. What's more, I like putting my heart into all these problems and offering God very human things and very divine ones all at once. That's our Way, isn't it? Our feet on the ground, but always (every so often) looking at Heaven, so that afterwards we can see more clearly what's going on around us.

Camuñas (Toledo), 2 October 1949 ¹⁴

Dear Father,

I'm writing from Florentina's village (in Toledo). I've come here with her to get oil and flour. Let's hope they give us some – it would be great for keeping the daily food average¹⁵ down this year. We're praying a lot for that and applying all the means on the human plane. In the prayer I was telling Our Lord that we needed oil and charity among ourselves, and flour and more love of God. Pray for that too! [...]

Mexico D.F., 18 December 1950 ¹⁶

Dear Father,

[...] I'm also thinking about the Pope¹⁷ a lot these days; all the papers are talking about the war,¹⁸ and what world statesmen are saying, and I remember Psalm 2 and pray for them. But how sad it makes me that none of them talks about what the Pope is saying right now. But he has us behind him, with you, doesn't he? – and that's another reason why I'm really glad you're back in Rome.

Pray a little for me to be able to combine Christmas, and love and affection for my sisters (they're much more sensitive here!) with fortitude and firmness. Because sometimes I go too far in one direction or the other, and I really don't want to fail to help them as much as I possibly can.

Mexico D.F., 15 March 1951 ¹⁹

Dear Father,

[...] You already know what to say to Our Lord about all this, and about me. I'm sure you can find a moment to spend on me. Because you know exactly what this house consists of: apostolate with residents and the girls who come here, formation for the people in the Work, setting a good example. Organizing the house and keeping it in order. Money problems. [...] And, knowing me as you do, you can see that it's all much too much for me, can't you? But I don't get discouraged or scared; I only ask for your prayers that I may never fail to do what God wants in anything, big or small.

Mexico D.F., 3 July 1953 ²⁰

Dear Father,

Our Lord has been in this house since yesterday. Don Pedro²¹ came to say Mass and reserved the Blessed Sacrament. Last night, the first Our Lord spent here, we had a Vigil because today is the First Friday. I'm so happy! Now everything will go better, don't you think so? [...]

Personally I've been fairly disorganized about doing the norms,²² but now that the house is better organized I've made resolutions that it won't happen again. [...]

Mexico D.F., 24 April 1955 ²³

Dear Father,

I've been wanting to write to you ever since I finished the retreat. I did it in Montefalco, on 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th April. [...] I think I did a good retreat; I made a deep confession, covering the whole year, and I made some resolutions which I want to fulfil with God's help and yours. I put myself in Our Lord's presence exactly as I saw myself, and exactly as I saw how things are going; and I asked God for help to find the points where I fall short. If I told you that I experienced spiritual consolations, I wouldn't be telling the truth; but I can assure you that without ups or downs, I find God almost constantly in everything, all too naturally! I think I am very serene. The certainty of having God with me on my journey makes everything a source of happiness, makes it so easy for me to do things I didn't use to like doing that I just do them without any effort.

Father, I have just one worry: can this way I'm following really be the path to Heaven? I find it too comfortable, because I almost never have any personal problems. The only thing that makes me suffer is seeing a lack of self-giving, etc., in one of the others – and even that doesn't take away my peace of mind.

The basic resolution from the retreat was to let the others govern. To cancel myself out, little by little, so that they have more and more sense of responsibility. I've done enough governing, don't you think? [...]

Immaculate Conception Hospital (Madrid), 25 July 1957 ²⁴

Dear Father,

The worst is over now, and, thank God, and thanks to everyone's help, I'm very well.²⁵ It's been a week of great physical pain, but great consolation for the spirit! I've felt love and affection, zeal and union with you, my sisters and everything concerning the Work more than ever before; thank you yet again! I didn't deserve all that. The letters from you, Encarnita,²⁶ and everyone, were the best thing of all.

I'll try to behave well and be brave. Awareness of God's presence works wonders. How one notices it! I want to get back soon and be useful.

Madrid, 4 June 1958 ²⁷

Dear Father,

I was waiting to write to you until I heard what the doctors said, but as they're taking their time I won't wait any longer. They did a very thorough set of tests, but haven't yet said anything about a diagnosis or what healthcare plan they think I should follow. Personally, I feel better every day, and I can tell that my heart is strong enough for me to continue active work, although as you know I'm ready, if Our Lord wants, to work as usual on whatever, however and wherever I'm asked.

My brother Eduardo²⁸ arrives in Madrid shortly and he'll talk to the doctors too. He's on his way to Pamplona with enormous enthusiasm, together with his wife Laurita, who's also a daughter of yours. Pray for them to be effective there, and better people every day – they and their seven children.

I'm living in Velazquez Street, in an apartment which has just been set up to look after the St Gabriel apostolate²⁹ independently. Because Montelar³⁰ can't cope with it all. How fast everything's growing! Don Alvaro celebrated the first Mass for us and reserved Our Lord in the Tabernacle the same day; first, he preached a meditation to us. He talked to us about Rome and for us, it was like being there with the Father – as in reality we always are, and want to be more and more, even when, like now, we're a long way away.

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2. ALWAYS CLOSE:

In love with God

How do people become saints? Guadalupe understood in depth that it's not about being perfect but being in love. That means that every little touch of love was an opportunity for conversation with Jesus Christ, and every defect led her to say sorry and was a sign of the enormous love with which God sees every single person. St Josemaria used to say that "the saint is are not the person who never falls, but rather the one who never fails to get up again,"³¹ and that conviction led Guadalupe to rest in God's hands at all times.

*Bilbao, 25 September 1945*³²

Dear Father,

I'm going to try and tell you everything I'm feeling these days and as the bad part is the bit I find most difficult, I'll tell you that first. The other day I had a temptation that I was very sorry about, though I don't think I consented to it. I thought, why shouldn't I be the *dignior*³³ instead of Carmen?³⁴ When I realized, I got a bit sad, but I told Nisa³⁵ about it and felt happy again. Pray a lot for me to be humble. I also told Nisa in the confidence³⁶ that during the last days I spent in Madrid, I had angina (it has happened a few times before) and, as I realized it was normal, I didn't say anything so as not to worry her, but afterwards I felt that I ought to tell her. As I hardly ever have anything wrong with me, I was almost grateful to Our Lord for that little pain because I had something to offer up to him, and I think if nobody notices it pleases him more. But if it happens again I will talk about it. I'm very happy here. Some days I'm extra aware of God's presence (I don't know how to put it into words). Sometimes I think that, in order not to deprive me of any pleasure, Our Lord has brought me to a new house which I am now getting ready for him, and very soon he will come to stay here with me.

In spite of all this, there are many days when I fall asleep in the prayer, and in general I often get distracted. I try to obey always and be attentive to everything (sometimes self-love pops up). These things don't have any merit at all, because as soon as something goes wrong my reaction is to point out that it isn't my fault, though sometimes I say nothing. I had a letter from my mother; although to begin with she was sorry when I moved away from Madrid, she's completely resigned to it now. Remember her, please, occasionally, and also my brother, who needs it so much.

Bilbao, 12 December 1945 ³⁷

Dear Father,

Today's my name-day. [...] I'm very happy at every level. Don Alvaro³⁸ always asks me if I'm really happy, and I'm happier than I've ever been before. Although I can see that I do everything with lots of defects (especially vanity and self-love), I realize that Our Lord is helping me so much that I'm sure that if he really wants, I will manage to please him truly. Today I prayed very much for you, with all my soul, and afterwards for myself. I don't think that's selfish, because if Our Lord grants me the grace of being better (more mortified, humbler, etc....) he will grant me all the other things he knows I want: vocations, solutions to the Work's problems, etc. and the things my mother and my brothers need (especially for them to be better people).

[...] We now have Our Lord in the house.³⁹ What a difference that makes! What's more, he's so close to my room that I necessarily have to think about him constantly. Every day I want to prove to him more what I feel for him and how grateful I am for all his huge love.

Bilbao, 12 January 1946 ⁴⁰

Dear Father,

Every night when I examine my conscience I see that I've left out something from the plan of life⁴¹ – some days I didn't do the reading, some days I skipped the rosary, or else said it without even realizing what I was doing, or I cut a bit of time off the prayer [...]. As I write it now I feel really sorry for having done this because as you know for

sure, it's nothing but lack of awareness of God's presence, and a lot of disorderliness. And in spite of everything I do fight and I do make an effort (I assure you!) and I want you to be able to have confidence in me, and Our Lord to be happy with me. I even sometimes think that he is, and he forgives me, because I can see how much he helps me despite it all.

Don't imagine that that means I'm not happy – I am, very! I enjoy everything I have to do and I try and do it as well as I can (I also have a lot of self-love and I try to stop it from showing, but I don't always manage). [...]

Now I'm in charge of the oratory, and you can't imagine how much I enjoy it. We have a little figure of Baby Jesus,⁴² – such a cheeky little baby! – and I feel so close to the Tabernacle... The other day, almost without thinking, I gave it a kiss; was that disrespectful?

Bilbao, 1 April 1946 ⁴³

Dear Father,

[...] Father, I haven't got much to tell you about myself, as I said to Don Jose Maria,⁴⁴ because my head is so full of the house and my sisters that I never even remember my own little worries.

The prayer is nothing but petitioning for and thinking about the little problems of the day, and I do that so constantly that I sometimes think I must be boring Our Lord, but I'm sure he understands. I notice his help so much! Especially in the confidences of my sisters, and in the circle,⁴⁵ I sometimes find myself saying things that come into my head I don't know how. I also told Don Jose Maria that it's very difficult to find mortifications. Before I used to be able to find them at meals, but not now. I've got a healthy appetite but it doesn't matter to me what I eat, how much or how little, hot or cold. I can't explain it, but that's how it is. Generally speaking nothing costs me an effort; Our Lord continues to feed me on baby-food, as you told me before. I am deeply grateful to him for it, and what I want to do is store up all these graces, so that if the time comes when I find everything really difficult, I'll still be able to be as happy as I am now. [...]

Bilbao, April 1946 ⁴⁶

Dear Father,

[...] In the prayer Our Lord helped me to see all these faults very clearly. How good he is! And I realized that I needed to tell you about them right at the start of my letter to you. As I've always done that up till now, I end up totally at peace, but just occasionally I'm tempted to think of how to put things (so that they won't sound too bad to you). But, thank God, when the moment comes I just let my pen run on and never alter what I've written.

Every day I see more clearly how close Jesus is to me at every moment. I could tell you about small, constant incidents that no longer even surprise me – I thank him for them and look out for them all the time. Today, for example, my alarm-clock stopped and he woke me up, and (because the clock had started again) he made me realize that it wasn't telling the right time, and we got up exactly when we should have. [...]

He ensures that I remember things at the right moment and helps me amazingly to keep my things tidy (you know how much I need it).

Father, I'm very happy and I want to behave very well so that Our Lord may always help me like that and, at the same time, humble me so that my self-love and vanity, which put up such a fight, don't appear again. [...]

Bilbao, 28 July 1946 ⁴⁷

Dear Father,

I don't know where you will read this letter, maybe in Madrid – how I'd love to see you! But even if that doesn't happen, I'm very happy. Pray for me and for this house. [...] Sometimes I'm still a disaster, but as I don't pay attention to "self-love" and I always talk about everything straight away, I don't lose my peace of mind when I realize it's rearing its head. I try to be closer to the Tabernacle every day, and full of joy even if we get our heads broken,⁴⁸ as you put it.

Bilbao, 23 December 1946 ⁴⁹

Dear Father,

I'm sure the girls will take this letter with them to Rome so it will arrive within the Christmas season. [...] We're having a wonderful time setting up our Christmas crib and making all the preparations for Christmas here. [...]

Father, I'm really happy, and what's more, I always used to find the prayer hard work, but now very often it isn't, and the time I spend in the oratory seems very short to me. I know this will pass and I'll find myself slow and stupid again, and I don't mind.

*Madrid, 19 January 1947*⁵⁰

Dear Father,

I feel more and more certain that everything is good, and I'm so confident of that fact that even things that look like disasters (unless they're caused by our lack of love for God) make me happy and don't scare me. [...]

Pray very much for us to pass on this craziness to other people and not be a failure. I try to keep before everyone's eyes the importance of us four doing well on the inside. I put my best efforts into the prayer and keeping everything tidy and in order; I talk about everything; and when I do the examination of conscience at night and see so many shortcomings (in the norms,⁵¹ presence of God, outbursts of temper or vanity) I make acts of humility and stay perfectly happy.

*Bilbao-Madrid, 7 April 1947*⁵²

Dear Father,

I'm writing to you on the train. [...] Holy Week was incredibly busy, and I hardly got a chance to keep Our Lord in the Tabernacle company, but I'm sure that's the way he wanted it and that's fine by me. My prayer is simply giving thanks and praying for people and things, and I almost forget about myself. [...]

Los Rosales (Madrid), 30 June 1947 ⁵³

Dear Father,

I think about things a lot, and I ask Our Lord to help me, and how I notice that he never leaves me! Sometimes in the prayer I can't think about anything, and I realize that my brain is tired from so much thinking, and all I want to do is lean on Our Lord and feel that I'm there; then I know how much I love him and I'm very happy. The rest of the day my presence of God consists of putting my head into the things I have to do (because otherwise nothing works out well, I have to really concentrate hard because I'm not at all quick or clever at thinking).

Madrid, 21 September 1947 ⁵⁴

Dear Father,

Although I sometimes feel scared when I think about the coming year, I keep calm and I'm confident that everything will work out. These days I've got my head so full of the house, cupboards, etc., that I've neglected the plan of life a bit: I skipped the Rosary, I spent the reading and the prayer thinking about all the goings-on in the house, but I'll try and make sure it doesn't happen again. Pray a lot for me not to be so taken up by the material side of my work and to keep living through every day with more love for God. I don't know how to explain it to you properly, but it does happen to me. When I have many material worries I get a bit carried away. [...] Father, we're trying to pray hard for girls to come to the residence, and although we haven't got a single firm booking, I feel sure that they will come. Please help us by praying for us.

Madrid, 22 December 1948 ⁵⁵

Dear Father,

We're doing a recollection⁵⁶ and I want to take advantage of this time to write to you. Christmas is just two days away. I'd like to be able to give the Baby something of my own, that would please him, but I can't find anything. Father, I fall short in so many ways, inside myself and outwardly, but I don't get discouraged. I'll keep on putting my head

and heart more fully every day into learning how to relate to God and to the girls here. In the prayer, in mortification, etc., I don't have the sort of awareness of God's presence that makes one see clearly how things need to be done... Now specifically, I want to learn how to keep the house in good order and ensure the others do too. When I see that the others aren't concerned about this, I think it's because I haven't managed to put across to them the things that I'm told, and I feel responsible for all of it. I feel more closely united to the Work and to you every day. When I talk to the girls about doing apostolate I find it very easy to get enthusiastic, and I think I pass that on. But I don't yet have the solid interior life which is the only thing that lasts, and which I need to teach others how to have.

Molinoviejo (Segovia), 11 January 1949 ⁵⁷

Dear Father,

Today we finish our retreat, and I'm sure we all want things to go as you want – which is as God wants.

I've gone through some bad moments. The first few days all I could do was cry with sorrow at seeing how ungrateful I am to the Work, to you, to God! I talked to Don Jose Maria and recovered my serenity. Father, as you know, before I came to the Work I didn't know anything. [...] So I have all the more to be grateful for. I left so little, and received so much! That's the truth of it.

Then, I thought a lot about my work: heaps of things occurred to me and I got upset and even wanted the retreat to be over so that I could fight, acquire order, and work with the girls in the residence.

I don't think I've ever felt so many things all at once: desires to be humble, good, and hard-working. But in spite of everything I didn't conquer myself and at one point I made the others laugh – you know what I'm like. I need more seriousness. Help me to acquire it. I ought to think about my age, which is advancing, and especially take all the responsibility that the Work wants me to have, and I sometimes forget that.

Everything was covered in snow, but with some sunny days. Between the sessions we went out to see the countryside: how beautiful all

this is, all that God does for us! [...]

I rely on your help, on my sisters' help, on everything. And all I have to contribute is my strength (very little) and my very great desires to love God really and truly.

Molinoviejo (Segovia), 17 October 1949 ⁵⁸

Dear Father,

I'm in Molinoviejo looking after a retreat. There's a group of twelve girls plus two of us, so fourteen altogether. We thought more girls would come, but... they didn't. Pray for them. [...]

They've told me about Mexico. Thank you. I would be just as happy if I didn't go, as you know, but I'm delighted to go, though as a matter of fact I don't think much about it. I just spend a short time on it in the prayer every day, and I say a rosary or two to my Virgin, Our Lady of Guadalupe, praying to her for everything I don't yet know.

About myself I don't know what to tell you. Before Our Lord I'm one thing, I pray for everything, but my prayer gets stuck time after time on one idea. At present it's a word, "fainting", but not in the sense of losing strength but just the opposite. I read it in one of the offertory prayers of the Mass and I think it's what happens to me when I have a strong sense of God's presence, and I'm so happy that I can hardly bear it physically. I think you can understand me, can't you?

Molinoviejo (Segovia), 12 December 1949 ⁵⁹

Dear Father,

Today is the last day of our retreat and it's also my name-day. I'm sure everyone has prayed a lot for me – I can feel it and I want to put it to good use. How many things I have in my head and my heart! The Work, you, my sisters... This is going to be almost my only resolution from the retreat: to help them, to teach them (I don't know what, but it doesn't matter, God will be at my side). This time, unlike other years, I didn't think about my past life. I know I offended Our Lord before joining the Work, but he's often forgiven me, and I don't want to think about it any more. This time, I tried to see my failures to respond to the

very great graces that Our Lord has given me since I became one of his daughters in the Work. And that's enough to fill me with heartfelt sorrow and produce many resolutions.

In order to battle afresh, conquer my own laziness, be mortified, always cheerful and vibrant, I try never to think about the things I find difficult [...] like that I have an awareness of God's presence that is not about feelings but is a stimulus to act: *serviam*, I will serve! "Come on, let's do it!" – and I never feel like a victim or unfortunate. I also try not to be afraid of anything: everything that happens to anyone, I think: that could happen to me, and I think about how I would react, and then if it does happen, I've prepared for it beforehand. If I do something, I think: I may have done that badly, and then if someone points out that I did it badly, because I was expecting it I'm actually happy. I'm even always ready for physical suffering (though I'm very healthy) and so when something hurts I receive it as something I was expecting, and I'm happy too. I don't know if I'm explaining this properly. You can see that as I'm very simple-minded, my interior struggle is very easy.

My two basic shortcomings are: not putting all the effort I could into the norms of the plan of life.⁶⁰ Most of the time I don't put an effort into the prayer, into the Mass or into Holy Communion. [...] And the other shortcoming is not having put enough effort into helping my sisters to progress, have interior life, etc. I'm more concerned with bringing new vocations than with looking after the people who already have a vocation. I understand that I bear a lot of responsibility in this field, and I'll put my whole soul into trying to ensure it doesn't happen any more.

I've told you in other letters about my inner conversation with God, my prayer, etc.: when I make a bit of an effort, Our Lord makes it easy for me and I just surrender myself entirely.

Today I prayed very hard to Our Lady for us to be able to do a lot of good in Mexico. I know it will be hard at the start, but I don't mind.

The only thing left for me to tell you is that I'm not aware of ever failing to be sincere, either in spiritual guidance, or in confession, or in my letters to you.

Mexico D.F., 13 May 1950 ⁶¹

Dear Father,

I'd love to be able to tell you that on 18 May we'll have Our Lord in our house, but it's not definite. It depends on the gilder who's restoring the altarpiece with the picture of Our Lady, and the altar. How much I'd love it if we could have the first Mass here on such a great day, the feast of the Ascension! Please keep it in mind, and pray on that day for this house, and also pray a bit for me: on that day I made my First Communion, I moved into a centre of the Work, and I also did the Fidelity.⁶² [...]

Mexico D.F., 20 October 1950 ⁶³

Dear Father,

Together with these letters you'll get a lot of photos of the house and all of us, and plenty of specific information about our work here in Mexico. If you could only see how much we love this country already, and how we're entering into the feelings and aspirations of the girls here. [...] Pray a lot for them. What matters is that they progress at the rate God wants for each of them. [...]

I also want to tell you something good about myself. I'm happy and I'm putting my whole self into everything, with greater joy every day; but there's nothing that ties me down. I think that if at any given moment I was told to leave ... something or everything, I wouldn't find it hard, whether it was people or things. That must sound crazy, because humanly speaking it would be impossible to combine those two feelings, but this is precisely why I feel sure God is there at the bottom of everything; even though, especially in my times of mental prayer, I hardly ever hear him speak at the moment. The rest of the day I have an almost constant awareness of his presence, which seems so real that I never feel alone. [...]

I'll also tell you about my faults. I've sometimes felt lazy [...]. I put off writing to my mother for a month. And perhaps I behave less understandingly towards Manolita (who's the one I have most confidence in) than towards the others. I try to fight against all these little things and others like them, and I use them as ways to humble myself constantly in

the eyes of God, of you, Don Pedro, myself, and my sisters if they happen to see them; and so I keep going.

Mexico D.F., 1 February 1954 ⁶⁴

Dear Father,

I'd like to be able to tell you some good things about myself to make you happy, but all I can do is tell you the truth: as always, and for always, I want to be faithful, I want to be useful, and I want to be holy. But the reality is that I still have a long way to go. Outwardly, I don't think I behave badly. I do the norms⁶⁵ (generally speaking, though I can't say I never miss out a single one), I use my time as well as I can. I'm always happy, I control my temper (I very seldom get over-excited); I follow the customs of the Work; I offer the usual mortifications. But inside I'm not happy about the way I do things. I could give more in everything, have a greater awareness of God's presence (although I almost never lose it, it could be more intense and more effective). In short, I can see that I'm still full of defects.

But I'm not discouraged, and with God's help and your support and everyone's, I hope I'll win through in the end.

I love what I'm doing (although, as I always tell you, if I was asked to do something else I'd love that just as much). I'm really happy here in Mexico (but I wouldn't mind going somewhere else either). I would like this year to show a big step forward in outward things (the Centre of Studies,⁶⁶ Hospitality Training School... vocations, Guatemala, kindergarten), and on the inside: for me and all of us to belong more completely to God. That's the way it needs to be always. [...]

Montefalco (Mexico), 7 May 1956 ⁶⁷

Dear Father,

A group of us oldies are doing a retreat in Montefalco [...]; and I think we're doing a good retreat. It makes me sad not to be able to tell you I've improved a lot, but no way,⁶⁸ I carry on the same: a lot of good will, great big, sincere resolutions to be holy, but still very far from it. I

think that this new year (from this retreat till the next one), is going to be a time of big steps forward in every sense.

We're very much looking forward to the arrival of the people from Rome, both Spanish and Mexican; with them here the apostolate will grow wider and deeper, and the sap will be renewed, which we all need from time to time. I'm longing to see them.

I'd like them to tell me if I could do the confidence⁶⁹ with one of them; I do it now, of course, with Don Pedro, or in confession, but I think I need it just as it is, to get down to details etc. I'm sure that that will be a help in my interior life, which is not progressing much.

I think I told you in other letters that I do offer small mortifications; that there's nothing – in the field of meals, curiosity, little discomforts, cold water, heroic minutes – that I don't do, and relatively easily. I don't find it hard to conquer myself in these things. I may do more or I may do less, but they don't involve much of a struggle. And neither do I feel any disordered attachment (heart) for anything or anyone. What I do struggle to do is put more of my heart into things, because perhaps my charity doesn't go very deep.

Sometimes the people I live with have told me about this; they say that they can tell I'm concerned for them, but that a point arrives when they come up against a barrier in me, that they don't feel they get to the depths in my comprehension of them etc. Father, I don't totally understand about that, but I'm going to ask God for more love for him, and like that I'm sure I'll love the others more too. Pray a lot for me to manage that.

And once again I'll tell you that I'm ready to leave my position here very happily, or to continue in it, or to stay in Mexico as the last of all,⁷⁰ (remember that my formation in the Work was a bit ad-hoc, and that naturally the ones who come here from Rome will know more than I do, thank God, because I know a little about lots of things, though sometimes I feel scared at the clear insights God gives me about things that I had no way of learning), or to leave Mexico and go wherever to do whatever you say – as happy as can be.

*Mexico D.F., 2 October 1956*⁷¹

Dear Father,

I'm already counting the days till I get there.⁷² I'm so happy! Everyone tells me I won't recognize the house or the girls there, because almost none of them are "oldies". How old I am now! I notice it day after day, in everything, – and how good that is too!

When I talk to you I wish I could give you the happiness of seeing that I've grown on the inside (which is ultimately what matters) as well as growing in age; but I think I'm still just the same on that score. Disastrous, isn't it! I sometimes think that Our Lord sees my efforts to serve him, and that'll make up for how little I manage to improve on the inside, and it comforts me a little, but sometimes I think it won't, and it makes me very sad. Of course it doesn't last, because as you know I'm not at all pessimistic by nature – just the opposite.

Pray a lot for me to get all the fruit God wants me to from this trip. Ever since I received the note asking me to be in Rome for 20 October, the only thing I've been praying for is to have the same docility and simplicity as the very first time I saw you; and that although I may have a bit more experience in some things, that won't be any kind of obstacle to my obedience. Pray, too, that God will grant me this, and let's hope we obtain it. I think that the apostolate of the next few years will be focused on what we hear in Rome during these coming days... I think there'll be a lot, and I feel a great responsibility, but at the same time confidence, peace, and a huge love for God, the Work and you, Father, as the person who represents it all.

I don't know how clear this letter sounds, but I'll send it just as it is; I've never failed to send you any of the letters I've written to you, and I'll send this one too.

*Molinoviejo (Segovia), 9 January 1960*⁷³

Dear Father,

Today, your birthday, I'm on a retreat in Molinoviejo. I've just been to confession. And once again I've seen how many faults there are deep in my soul. But also, I've once again told Our Lord I'm sorry, and I feel certain (you know all about this) that he forgives me and is happy in spite of it all. And I'm crazily happy! With renewed peace, joy, zest and

strength after spending these days dusting out the corners. Father, I offer this to Our Lord today, at the same time as praying for you, Father, for Almighty God to grant you everything that I'd give you if I could, and so many other things that don't even occur to my little brain. [...]

Goimendi Residence (Pamplona), 21 July 1962 ⁷⁴

Dear Father,

Today we're doing the day of recollection⁷⁵ in the annual course,⁷⁶ and after a careful, detailed examination of conscience, in Our Lord's presence, I'm writing to you, Father, so that, as usual, you can continue getting to know me in depth, helping me and praying for me.

Once again I can see the quantity of good things and graces that Our Lord has brought about, and is still bringing about, within me and around me. And I can also see that, without any particular effort, I've usually corresponded with his grace in the things I had to do. But that's all. I have plenty of drive in apostolate and proselytism with people,⁷⁷ in family life in our centre, and in my professional work. But I just fulfil the norms;⁷⁸ I don't put much effort into them, and in my prayer, I'm seldom completely alone. Admittedly, all the things that occupy my mind are Our Lord's concerns, the things he's placed in my hands through you, Father, and my sisters; but I can't detach myself from them.

It's true that I don't mind whether I'm in one place or another, and, as you know, Father, I'm always happy wherever I'm put. But I never lay aside all that, all the things that affect me from moment to moment, in order to spend a while centred totally on God. Perhaps I'm not explaining it very well, but pray for me; you know what I mean. Pray for this daughter of yours to receive the grace she hasn't yet learned to make use of, because I can also tell that Our Lord is giving it to me, and that's why he's asking me for this.

Madrid, 29 December 1962 ⁷⁹

Dear Father,

I'm doing my retreat, and as always, during these days of silence one seems to be closer to Our Lord, although what really happens is that because one isn't thinking of other things, one can hear him more clearly. And for that same reason I feel clearly that I need to write to you, Father, and tell you maybe the usual stuff, how your daughter is on the inside. I want to break through a kind of laziness – that's what I call it – that stops me from keeping up my relationship with God intensely. Every year when I do the retreat I make the same resolution: to put more effort into my mental prayer, Holy Communion, etc., making a greater contribution on my side. This year I've concluded that it's presumptuous to think that achieving that goal depends on me, on my efforts, so I propose to ask God for it as a gift. Please, Father, remember to pray for me.

Don't imagine that means I'm sad. Not in the slightest! I like everything I do, and even humanly I find it enjoyable. That's equally true of my professional work [...] and my apostolic task, the St Gabriel centre at Montelar,⁸⁰ and the St Raphael apostolate,⁸¹ which I never stop doing. I love helping my sisters on the Advisory.⁸² Living with them and being able to pray for their concerns, which also keep me in close contact with Rome, is another thing I'm constantly giving thanks for. And despite all this, you know, Father, that as always I'll be happy wherever I'm needed, and once again I place myself in your hands so that you and the Advisory can do whatever you like with me.

La Pililla (Avila), 6 July 1971 ⁸³

Dear Father,

[...] How grateful I am to God and the Work for this firm, simple faith, even though I understand more and more the need to go deeper into it and study so as to be able to arrive at well-founded reasons, as you always tell us. The faith of children and the doctrine of theologians, the right kind of theologians.

Right now all I want to say to you is “here I am”, more grateful than ever, knowing that I don't deserve anything, but that God, through the Work and you, increases in me the fidelity which on the human level is loyalty; and I trust that it will always be that way.

La Pililla (Avila), 4 September 1973 ⁸⁴

Dear Father,

During these days,⁸⁵ the subject we've been studying is the dogmatic theology of the "Last Things".⁸⁶ [...] Anyway, this subject has been wonderful and I've got used to thinking about death and heaven. May they come when God wants. I hope that Our Blessed Lady will help me and that I'll see her straight away [...].

We also heard your March letter⁸⁷ read and commented on. First of all, thank you! It made a deep impression on me, and I saw with joy that I am following you as closely as I can in these hard, difficult times. Your courage in calling things by their names produces a sense of total peace in me. I tell myself, "That's the very thing I'd have liked to say, but couldn't put into words." I also feel intense regret for not living totally according to my convictions... the personal examination of conscience you suggest, pointing to some of our failings, made me cry.

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3. A HUGE HEART:

Apostolic joy

Everyone who knew Guadalupe remembers her smile and cheerfulness. “You need a heart which is in love, not an easy life, to achieve happiness,”⁸⁸ said St Josemaria, and Guadalupe certainly seemed to incarnate the lesson in her life. Guadalupe’s huge heart, filled with love of God, lit up her life and her prayer, and drove her to share her treasure with whoever was close to her. In that huge heart of hers, heaven and earth met together. It was the energetic heart of an apostle, a daughter, a sister, and a friend.

Bilbao, 1 October 1946 ⁸⁹

Dear Father,

Yesterday Don Alvaro [del Portillo] and Don Pedro [Casciaro] arrived. I’m so happy! They told me we needed to pray hard for the big house in Rome and the negotiations you are doing for it right now. We’ll do so with all our souls, though these days I’m being possibly a bit impatient and irritable towards my sisters – as soon as they forget something or I think they’re not interested enough in something, I tell them so, and maybe sometimes, especially with Consi and Roser, I ought to keep quiet; I’ve got to the stage of worrying in the prayer about whether I don’t love them as much as the others who’ve stayed here. Obviously I’m determined to put that right and centre my thoughts on them, till I manage to pass on to them a real interest in everything that Our Lord (without any effort and so without any merit on my part) has placed in me, – because if it had cost me any effort, I certainly wouldn’t have had the strength.

Bilbao, October 1946 ⁹⁰

Dear Father,

[...] Don Jose [...] told us especially “to make ourselves loved” by everyone around us. How right he is! I’d like to achieve that, above all with my sisters; I want them to find in me a big heart, which Our Lord places in us when we truly give ourselves to him. Pray for me to manage it, and keep this daughter of yours very much in mind.

Bilbao, 3 November 1946 ⁹¹

Dear Father,

Yesterday we heard that you’re definitely not coming to Bilbao. We’d been looking forward to seeing you so much, but even though we won’t, we’re still perfectly content. Pray a lot for us to be closer to Our Lord every day, which is what matters. I was dying to tell you that I want to do the Fidelity⁹² as soon as possible. Father, although I haven’t been in the Work long enough, I feel as though I’ve been in it all my life, because everything that went before seems as if it was done by another person (and I trust that Our Lord will also have forgotten it, won’t he?). [...]

Father, I think I told you once that I didn’t have any crosses, because nothing I did cost me any trouble. The same is true now, but I am finding some: my crosses are my worries about the others, when I see my sisters struggling, and realize that the girls are not coming along very fast, and feel there’s nothing I can do about it. But I try to receive them all with joy and do what I can, and I hand the rest over to Our Lord to take care of.

Bilbao, 17 November 1946 ⁹³

Dear Father,

Sometimes I’m alarmed at the faith and certainty I have when I pray for certain things. I said this to Don Jose in case it was vanity, but he reassured me, and I simply thank God for it.

Maybe I’m a bit too demanding on my sisters, I never fail to tell them when they do something wrong, and although I love them and pray for them, and there’s nothing I wouldn’t do to help them when

they're struggling, I don't let that show, and I'm quite hard on them: I need to be more understanding.

I say all of this to Don Jose and I'm determined to fight with all my strength and pray hard to obtain a big heart. Please help me!

When all five of us are together we have a whale of a time, and as you know I'm a bit of a clown,⁹⁴ so I make them laugh, but I usually remain aware of God's presence. In my particular exam⁹⁵ I focus especially on cheerfulness and presence of God and [...] ask Our Lord to help me have them. Pray for me.

Bilbao, 17 December 1946 ⁹⁶

Dear Father,

On 13 December Marichu and Raquel arrived in the morning, and Pilarin and Consi left in the afternoon, all as happy as can be. The girls who come here are always amazed to see the joy we take in being together and also in being separated.

Marichu has told us lots of things about all the [Opus Dei] centres, and she said you sounded happy when you wrote, and that when you come from Rome you'll spend time with us and there'll be lots of vocations. Terrific! Every time someone makes up her mind [to follow our path] it makes me so happy – happier than anything else! [...]

Bilbao, 25 January 1947 ⁹⁷

Dear Father,

Nisa sent us a copy of a letter from you. The things you say encourage us enormously! I can assure you that we put real joy into the things we do every day. I just wish you could see how much we enjoyed ourselves today! After tea, as it was Sunday, the four of us stayed in the kitchen for a while with Gloria [...] and Ricarda [...], chatting with them. Then we sang some Basque songs, quite quietly, and finally, Father, we even danced a *sardana*, taught by Roser! They were peeling potatoes and were delighted.

Then we went up to do the prayer, and I'm sure all of us prayed for them. [...] After our prayer I took a copy of *The Way* downstairs [to the bedroom of Maria, the cook, who was in bed with a cold], (Felisa was there too) and we read the chapter on "Our Lady". That's how your daughters in Abando spent Sunday afternoon. [...]

Tomorrow Don Jose will preach a day of recollection for them. It could be decisive for some of them. Lots of girls are coming here regularly. [...] There are many who don't yet understand the Work, and others who already love us a lot. Father, I'm ambitious – I'd like all the girls who come here to have a vocation and be as happy as we are, or at least to adopt our way of being. I think that if we put everything into praying for them, we'll achieve that.

Father, it makes me sad that I'm not doing the prayer very well. Pray that Our Lord will teach me to – I'm sure he'll take more notice of you than of your daughter Guadalupe.

*Bilbao, 24 March 1947*⁹⁸

Dear Father,

We're very happy, and so full of fun that sometimes I think we laugh too much. The few times we are together, you wouldn't believe what a good time we have! Sometimes I lose my gravity and act the clown – it's like something exploding, and I can't help it. But don't imagine we go too far, and Our Lord sees to it that in spite of everything the others respect me a lot.

*Los Rosales (Madrid), 25 June 1947*⁹⁹

Dear Father,

We've now begun the course,¹⁰⁰ all thirteen of us, very happy and very keen to improve. The house looks really bright and cheerful, and everyone who has done the confidence with me so far shows great sincerity and simplicity. [...] For me all of this is a lesson. I'm completely at peace, and I can see very clearly indeed how Our Lord is helping me.

We're taking great care of the farm and the loom, as well as the house. The classes are a thorough examination of our life in the Work.

Help me to learn to have a lot of love for God so that I can pass it on to my sisters – that’s what I’ve been praying hardest for ever since I got here. [...]

Pray a lot for me, and send me wherever and however you want, always. Wherever I am, I put everything I have into it, and Our Lord looks after the rest.

Mexico D.F., 20 October 1950 ¹⁰¹

Dear Father,

I talk a lot with the residents; there’s no difficulty about that on their part, but just the opposite – they’re waiting for a chance to tell me all about everything from start to finish, every little thing – *toditito*, as they say here.

They have total confidence in us, it’s fantastic. Sometimes it really makes me suffer a lot to see how far some of them are from God. You often come across twenty-year-olds who think they’ve lost the faith. It’s almost never true, thank God, but they need to realize that. There’s so much we can do to help them... For the first time in my life I’ve sometimes felt that to help one of these girls Our Lord himself was urging me to petition him, to make sacrifices for them and to talk to them. [...] I’m sure that you can follow what I’m saying, and I don’t think it’s bad, is it? Although you can be sure that what matters most to me are the people in the Work and those who will join it soon.

Mexico D.F., 11 November 1954 ¹⁰²

Dear Father,

I haven’t written to you directly for a long time, although every time I write to Rome I think that the letter is for you, and when I talk about things that I think are good, I love to think how happy they’ll make you; and when I talk about things that worry me, I feel sure you’ll pray for us to put them right or bear them well.

But today I want to tell you about myself, though I don’t know if I’ll manage, because with so much thinking about the others I’ve stopped thinking about myself. The result is that sometimes I can’t even go to

confession properly or do the confidence well. Not because I miss anything out deliberately, when I know I ought to talk about it, but that I don't go into details very carefully.

I do the norms¹⁰³ as well as I can (though sometimes I don't finish the rosary and the reading). I keep to the timetable, I try to be orderly, I control my temper, and do small mortifications (the heroic minute, the way I sit, at meals, doing what I ought at every moment, controlling my imagination). I give a lot of importance to the circles and classes I have to give (I prepare them); in the confidences [...] I try to win people's trust and love, though I don't always succeed (maybe because when they see me close to, I don't set them a good enough example). [...] Generally I try to keep up a vivid awareness of God's presence in the whole conversation and give very little advice – only what I can see very clearly is needed.

[...] I don't get many opportunities to talk to girls, and what's more, I think it's better if the people who talk to them are nearer their own age. I'd always like my apostolate to be with people of my own age.

[...] Spiritually I'm always peaceful and cheerful. Generally I don't lose my awareness of God's presence, though that doesn't always stop me from avoiding or doing things I should (meaning that it doesn't always influence what I do as much as it needs to). My prayer is not very intense. I have great faith, trust and love (but I can hardly ever feel it).

What makes me suffer the most is a lack of self-giving or perseverance in people of the Work. But even that doesn't affect my state of mind.

I think that I'm detached from things and people. I don't mean that I'm indifferent to everything or everyone, but I don't find it hard to do without them at any given moment. Sometimes I haven't kept the accounts properly; although I've never spent anything unnecessarily either on myself or for the centres. But really because of shortage of time I didn't keep account of every penny.

My particular exam is saying short vocal prayers for the Roman College.¹⁰⁴ Since I can do so little in material terms, at least I can pray constantly to Our Lord for everything that's needed.

Madrid, 25 September 1959 ¹⁰⁵

Dear Father,

I hope this letter reaches you before 2 October,¹⁰⁶ so that you'll know for sure that day that I'm praying very specially for whatever you are asking Our Lord for, and thanking him for what you are thanking him for. I'm continually placing myself in God's hands, the Father's hands, and my sisters' hands, saying simply that I want to serve, in whatever way they tell me. [...] I'm more enthusiastic every day about the jobs I'm given to do, no matter what they are.

Now I'm going to be working quite a lot on the St Raphael apostolate in Montelar.¹⁰⁷ Pray for it; there's an enormous number of girls who come round, and they're terrific, they could understand us completely and find their right place in the Work. [...]

Father, I'm really strong, thank God, and my heart is young and healthy, but growing bigger every day – so many things fit into it, and how intensely we love in the Work!

Madrid, 21 November 1959 ¹⁰⁸

Dear Father,

[...] I want to tell you about the St Raphael apostolate in Montelar,¹⁰⁹ which is what's taking up almost all of my time this year, and where – after praying for Rome, you, and the whole world – my prayer always ends up, focusing on the names of the girls we are doing apostolate with there. Most of them are very modern-looking and don't have too many serious thoughts in their heads. But when you start talking to them, how delightful they are, and how badly they want to be filled with something different! Father, we need to help them a lot. Pray for them; pray for us to see, behind the appearances, what possibilities each of them has, and for lots of vocations to come. The atmosphere is warming up. The girls are beginning to feel a sense of spiritual uncertainty and questioning. They're getting to know the Work from the St Raphael circles,¹¹⁰ and from contact with our Centres and ourselves. They're starting to receive spiritual guidance.¹¹¹ And we're already preparing the 2nd retreat in Molinoviejo. The girls want to work and be useful, so to-

gether with the mobile health clinics in two deprived areas of Madrid, we've organized catechism classes, little schools for poor children, circles and classes for working women, sewing workshops, etc., and we now have nearly 100 St Raphael girls working. I could tell you some wonderful stories. One of the girls who came today belongs to a very well-known family and at the beginning of the year she was just a hair-brained child, but today she appeared with a big bouquet of flowers and asked, turning quite pink, if she could put it near the Tabernacle. Lots of them spend some time in mental prayer, and almost all of them drop in to say hello to Our Lord when they arrive and on their way out. Those are the sorts of little details that make us so happy!

Madrid, 29 September 1961 ¹¹²

Dear Father,

[...] It's true that it hurts when people don't understand. But it makes one so happy to see how more and more people, realizing the urgency of arriving in time to many activities and many sectors of society, are dedicating all their strength and plunging into the apostolate, forgetting their little personal problems. That really is something to thank God for!

Father, I have to stop without telling you the best part of all, because I'm unable to put it into words. But you already know it: here I am, I want to serve with all my soul.

Valencia, 2 February 1973 ¹¹³

Dear Father,

I'm spending a few days in Valencia for my work, and I want to write to you briefly from here.

I came here to give a lecture at the Home Textiles Fair 1973. It's over, and I think it went well. These things don't keep me awake at night, but I do prepare them and try to put my best efforts into them.

The most important part of my work is teaching at the Centre for Study and Research in Domestic Sciences [CEICID]; it makes me so happy! I sometimes think I don't have the strength any more, physi-

cally, for all the hustle and bustle involved, but I keep on doing it and it looks as if Our Lord is determined that I should, because the whole runs on wheels and I don't find any way of saying no.

Father, I always remember your visit to the CEICID centre in Madrid, and all the things you said to us. Pray for us, and especially for me, that I may always do what Our Lord wants.

I've seen the doctors again, and "it seems that my heart is growing" (what a very deep-seated disease!). Ultimately what matters is whether, big or little, it belongs entirely to God.

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4. DESIRE TO SERVE:

Working for God

Guadalupe learned from St Josemaria to “turn the prose of every day into heroic verse” – she discovered that her meeting-place with God was her work. Because her heart was in love, she saw God among her chemical formulae, in running a hall of residence, in her housework, and in the work of governance of Opus Dei. Guadalupe’s life teaches us that any honest occupation is a path to union with God; that any job, however brilliant or however unremarked, can lead to Heaven. Guadalupe, by doing her work well, by her sense of responsibility and her commitment, offers an example to the man in the street, to all ordinary Christians who also want to discover that “divine something” in every one of their jobs and tasks.

Madrid, 31 December 1945 ¹¹⁴

Dear Father,

I’ve been told you prayed for me a lot on my name-day: it made me so happy! And how much I can tell that people often pray for me! Now I’m in charge of the laundry and cleaning, which I’ve never done before. I get a lot of things badly wrong, and I’m so silly that although I’ve got nothing to go on, I lay down the law about things quite offensively, usually without even realizing. Then afterwards I understand what I’ve done and say sorry. In general, I’m now realizing some very big defects that I hardly knew I had. For instance, I’m always quick to contradict other people, and I sometimes come out with some strange ideas just for the sake of saying the opposite, and then we start little arguments. How many ugly corners I have! And I want to get rid of them so much that when I realize something and say it to Nisa, I think I’ll never do it again, and within a minute I’ve fallen again. Thank goodness Nisa no-

tices and helps me very much indeed, always correcting me. I'm so grateful to her!

Right now I'm finding the prayer quite hard and I get badly distracted. I've missed out the spiritual reading quite a few days. We've put up the Christmas Crib with the crib figures Carmen sent us, and it's ended up looking very good indeed, after we spent two days changing the mountains round. Baby Jesus will be happy with it! I'd like to ask him to help me to develop the delicate charity I need so much! Please ask him that too, on behalf of your daughter Guadalupe.

Bilbao, August 1946 115

Dear Father,

I'm still basically disastrous, the other day I was preparing material for making purificators and I drew out the threads all wrong (one of the others managed to put it right, but it was a big nuisance) and I sew really badly because I don't focus my mind on it, and try to get it done too quickly. Once or twice I went to bed later than I should have, and because I'm also such a sleepy-head, on two afternoons I found myself falling asleep as I wrote, and decided to sleep, even just for five minutes (but it was wrong, I know that), with my head on the papers. [...] My prayer and presence of God are based on asking for things and being centred on my sisters [...] and service. [...]

Madrid, 4 July 1949 116

Dear Father,

The residence is nearly empty, there are only three students still here and all the rest of us are in the Work. We now have the whole of the top floor and the attic cleared, packed up and cleaned. What a perfect time to acquire the house next door and join them both up! Pray hard for that, Father. [...]

I'm happy, and praying to Our Lord to make me less thick-skulled (I'm a bit slow) because sometimes, with the best will in the world, I don't obey properly. [...] There's nothing I can do about it! But because I want to be as useful as possible, I want to learn to think more and

that's what I'm praying for. If he doesn't grant it to me, I'll be just as happy.

I don't know if I told you that I'm writing my thesis in my spare moments (I don't have many), and, God willing, I'll finish it in October. [...] I have to go to the laboratory; there are also some girls there to do apostolate with, so I make good use of the short times I'm there. Pray for them. [...]

Molinoviejo (Segovia), 24 July 1949 ¹¹⁷

Dear Father,

[...] In this house we live with a lot of *tension*,¹¹⁸ I assure you, but we need even more. Sometimes, when we see how happy and hard-working they all are, we think everything is fine, and forget that our job is nothing less than teaching them to be holy by being holy ourselves. We need to fine-tune what we are doing at every level. I sometimes see this with absolute clarity. [...]

I go back to Zurbaran tomorrow. Will we get the enlarging of the residence sorted out, I wonder? Pray a lot for it – it would make the apostolate so much easier, and increase it, and it would solve our money problems. Father, I'm sorry to sadden you, but this year we had another deficit. It was 36,000 pesetas in total. Some of that could have been avoided if we'd had a greater spirit of poverty. I especially regret that we weren't more careful about turning off electric lights. But in other respects I honestly think we were as careful as we could be. We're now working hard at getting residents for both houses together. Pray for that too, for the residence to be full from the beginning of October.

Madrid, 18 August 1949 ¹¹⁹

[...] I think we're gaining experience in running the residence and many of the difficulties of this past year can be solved satisfactorily. We're making notes about everything.

These days I'm perhaps obsessed with the residence and when I put my heart into something I go too far (it's one of my defects), because I don't manage to put it out of my head even during the prayer, but carry

on thinking about it. Of course, that's been happening to me ever since Don Jose Maria wrote from Santiago asking me to "be intensely concerned with the residence".

In my spiritual life one of these things that I take so deeply into myself has had a very bad effect. For a long period I had had an almost palpable awareness of God's presence, so that the effects of my times of prayer sometimes lasted for hours; and from the time I took on this concern for finding residents [...] I've changed. I don't worry about my feelings, what I want is to behave well and follow the right path in everything. So my doubt is whether I'm making enough of an effort to do the prayer well, and the plan of life in general. [...]

Madrid, 1 November 1949 ¹²⁰

Dear Father,

We've begun to get the house a bit better organized. I've been looking after the [household] administration these days. I started doing the cooking and enjoyed myself enormously; it's such a long time since I last did it – in Bilbao in fact. Father, now I'm sure that it doesn't matter to me in the slightest whether I'm the one in charge or obeying and working at whatever job it may be. That's what I always thought when I prayed about it, and it seemed to me that was the case, and now I've seen it in practice, and I thanked God for giving me the certainty that what one thinks sincerely in the prayer is always true. I'm sure you know what I mean. There's a lot of work to do in Lagasca because the services are down, so Nisa and I moved there today until they've got things sorted out. We'll try to work hard and also use our heads to think a lot.

In the past few days I missed out some of the norms of piety,¹²¹ what with moving to a different centre and doing a different job I lost track of things, but I'm already making resolutions so that it won't happen again. [...]

Mexico D.F., 22 July 1953 ¹²²

Dear Father,

All the houses are going more smoothly every day. We've been through some terrible months because the people in all three houses in Mexico City, plus the one in Monterrey, changed at the same time: it looked like we were crazy! But, thank God, they're all starting to look great now. I'm sure you'll see them soon – you are thinking of coming, aren't you?

Ever since we had our oratory everything's been going better, and the girls are much more focused.

On top of all that, I'm giving each person their field of responsibility. [...] I've been left with giving formation to the people of the Work [...] and the money problems (because there's nobody else who can sort them out for me).

What do you think of it? Pray hard for each of us to put our hearts into our jobs. We have a house which, if we make the most of it, could work magnificently. [...]

Cuautla (Mexico), 14 September 1953 ¹²³

Dear Father,

We're just finishing our retreat; 23 of us have been doing it. Thank God, each of the girls put a lot into doing it well, and Don Pedro made us (starting with me) very clearly aware of our duty and responsibility. I'm very happy, Father, for myself and for the good dispositions I can see in everyone. [...]

I think we're beginning a new stage in Mexico. We've practically got together a complete Advisory. I want to share out the various responsibilities. Perhaps the only difficulty in doing so is me myself. It's very difficult, after I've been carrying the weight of everything a bit – guidance of the people in the Work, household administration, apostolate etc. – just to eliminate myself.¹²⁴ I'm determined to try. It's all the same to me to carry on for always where I am now, or, if people prefer it, to take my turn at being the last of all. Father, here I am. Deep down, if I'm completely sincere, I think that if the last stage of my life could be obeying more directly and without having authority over anyone else (if that was God's will, naturally), it would suit me very well.

Mexico D.F., 19 March 1956 ¹²⁵

Dear Father,

I'm immensely pleased that people from Rome are coming to Mexico. [...] There's a crazy quantity of work just waiting to be done, and as you know, I've been at the head of things for too long now.

Last week I spent two days in Cuautla to set up the house that Gabriela (who's in the Work) is lending us for a retreat for St Raphael girls, because there are just too many of them for Montefalco. We worked extremely hard, setting up the oratory and moving everything around, but I was happy to find that that's how I rest the most, working physically and not having to think about everything there is for me to deal with.

Pray very much for me; I think this year we need to give a big push in spiritual terms and I have to be the first to do it. Up till now I've prayed for, and tried to achieve, the virtues that are indispensable in the Work (piety, work, cheerfulness, apostolate, spirit of sacrifice, etc.), and that's what I've also prayed for and tried to develop in everyone. Now I see a need to go deeper; that there ought to be contemplative souls in this Region by now, who desire and pray for things that are more elevated spiritually. Who are able to appreciate them. Help me to obtain that from God. If I'm no use for that sort of thing, pray for me not to be an obstacle that stops others from achieving it. Pray for me to receive from God the grace to guide them and encourage them to follow those paths, and have the ambition to follow them; and the humility and patience to understand, too, that maybe God does not want that for me, even though I desire it with all my soul. [...]

Madrid, 1 October 1962 ¹²⁶

Dear Father,

Tomorrow, 2 October, will be, as every year, a day filled with thanksgiving to Our Lord and to you, Father. There are so many good things to remember: the General Study,¹²⁷ the vocations that are coming, people's perseverance, and the fact of seeing that in spite of thousands of difficulties we are each growing steadily; and not just in years (which is no joke) but in certainty and serenity within the Work.

Here in this house, with its three doors – the Advisory, the household administration and the training centre – every aspect of the apostolate is reflected, and it's easy to practise them and pray for each of them. [...]

About myself: as usual, I'm very happy and full of desires to do things well and serve in what has been entrusted to me: helping my sisters on the Advisory, looking after the St Gabriel apostolate in Montelar and, through it, stirring lots of people into action, vocations of all kinds, Cooperators¹²⁸ and financial help. And my professional work is still teaching in the Maeztu Institute, but I hope soon to be teaching at a Women's College. I love teaching, and it's amazing how much one can do...

I do the norms [of the plan of life] with love, I pray for everything – and now, as you ask us to, I'm praying for the Council.

Madrid, 30 December 1964 ¹²⁹

Dear Father,

I've been wanting to write to you ever since I saw you in Pamplona. How much I enjoyed those days! I didn't miss a single opportunity of seeing you and listening to you; sometimes I had a bit of a right to be there, and other times I went anyway. But there I was, mixing with people everywhere; I love feeling that I'm just one of the crowd there, knowing that that's what I am, with no distinctions or shyness.

I'm writing to you at the end of a retreat, after thinking yet again about what's going badly, and really wanting to put it right. My resolutions are to love and help my sisters more (because, together with you, they are the people I love most in the whole world), beginning with the ones in my house; and, in order to do that, to have recourse to Our Lady all the time.

If things go on as they should I will soon defend my thesis (my supervisor is Piedad de la Cierva); it may turn out to be an interesting and original piece of work (right now the danger is that someone may publish something similar before mine). We've worked very hard on it.

If they announce a competitive examination for Work Training at the place where I'm teaching at the moment, I'll apply for it, and I'm equally ready to drop it all whenever I'm asked to.

Do you know where my current teaching job is located? It's in what used to be the Palacio de Miranda. It takes up the whole block (Garcia Morato Street, Nicasio Gallego Street, and Covarrubias Street), just opposite the Foundation for the Sick.¹³⁰ You can't imagine how often I think of the times you will have walked along that street... I'm thrilled at all the apostolate there is to be done there – they have about 1,000 girls and women between 12 and 20 or older, and there are still some subjects that haven't started up yet.

A few days ago one of my students whistled¹³¹ in the Work. There's a very good group of women teachers too... Father, as you can see, I'm doing apostolate with lots of people, women and girls from all sorts of backgrounds. [...] Remember to pray for them.

Madrid, 8 July 1965 ¹³²

Dear Father,

These pages¹³³ contain the result of many hours' work. It's just been awarded "cum laude" and I want to place it in your hands straight away, with everything I am and have, to be useful.

La Pililla (Avila), 6 February 1967 ¹³⁴

It's quite some time since I last wrote to you; I was waiting till the competitive exams were over so I could tell you I got through. I've spent a large part of this past year studying (about 2,000 hours) and the last term was almost all exams (I've been through 15 exams, all on an eliminatory basis: oral, written, practical...). In the first ones I took, which were "Secondary Teaching", they failed me on the penultimate exercise... (whereas I think it's the one I did best). No way! But in the ones for "Professional Teaching" which were the ones I most wanted to pass because it could mean staying in Madrid and teaching in the Women's School of Industrial Sciences, I passed. So I'll carry on teaching physics and chemistry where I've been for the past four years (Garcia Morato

Street, on the corner of Nicasio Gallego Street), opposite the Foundation for the Sick, which holds so many memories for you and everyone.

I just want to tell you that, as with everything else, this new step in my professional work is in your hands... (nothing ties me down, thank God).

Father, I saw you in Molinoviejo on 2 October. I was at the consecration of the altar in the second house, and I enjoyed it a lot. Afterwards Eduardo, on one of his journeys to Madrid, told me about all the time he'd spent with you as a doctor. I'm happy to think how united the families of everyone in the Work are becoming in so many ways.

Los Rosales (Madrid), 9 January 1969 ¹³⁵

Dear Father,

I'm really keen to serve now in this new job: the Faculty of Domestic Sciences, where the first degrees have just been completed and validated after three intensive months.

The first term of the diploma (1st year) is also over; there are nearly 40 numeraries in Zurbaran centre of studies¹³⁶ doing it. I've been teaching both groups, and I put everything I could into my teaching. It's a new joy that I have to thank God and you for – that my profession could be useful for something we love so much in the Work: household administration.

We're taking our first steps. Pray a lot for us. We've got students of 6 different nationalities. Now some are starting their doctorates. We need a lot of help. Knowing that you're praying for us is a great source of peace.

Madrid, March 1971 ¹³⁷

Dear Father,

I'm happy, I pray, I do apostolate with quite a lot of people, and I study as well as teach. In the Faculty we're preparing – one or two are already finished – short studies where we combine practical work in

household administration with scientific underpinning. It's not at a very high level yet, but we have to begin somewhere. [...]

La Pililla (Avila), 4 September 1973 ¹³⁸

Dear Father,

[...] In the coming academic year I want to concern myself thoroughly with my sisters, the apostolate and the house. At work I also have several goals: to take another step towards a professorship in Official Professional Teaching, and the possibility of a research award by publication of a book on textiles... all focused on domestic science.

It's also possible that in Pamplona they'll decide I need an operation... I'll keep you informed of developments over the next year. Pray a bit that Our Lord, who can do everything, manages to write straight even with me.

Madrid, 13 January 1974 ¹³⁹

Dear Father,

I'm doing the monthly day of recollection, and I want to chat a little with you about things I've been storing up in my head to tell you about. Sometimes, like now, I put it off, but I treasure things up and tell them in the oratory to Our Lord and to you. [...]

One item I'd like to tell you about is that in the Institute where I've been teaching for the past 10 years (I passed the competitive exam to become a tenured professor), they wanted me to be the Director. First the Ministry of Education made the proposal, and then my colleagues (about 40 lecturers), and I had to fight tooth and nail to avoid it. [...] I honestly wasn't expecting it; in fact I thought that I didn't fit in and that my overall influence was nil.

I was extremely sorry to be obliged to turn down the offer. I could have done such splendid apostolate (over 1,000 women students between 15 and 25). If only it had happened a few years ago! Now I'm not up to it physically. [...]

In domestic sciences we read two theses in my department this past term. One for validation and one for the first course. The types of research projects are developing well. The latest one was on a very interesting practical innovation; we did part of it in the laboratories of a well-known detergent manufacturer, where they gave us all kinds of facilities and insisted that Beatriz (the author of the thesis) should stay on and work for them. It was a good experience.

This Christmas I was in hospital in Pamplona. They did a very thorough set of tests. The physical pain doesn't seem that bad, and I stay totally calm while they're carrying out all the things they have to do. The result is that they said my valves are in the same state as they were last time (five years ago). One or two other things might be a little worse, but we can make up for that with tablets. [...]

Pray a lot, Father, for me and this house, for all of us [...] to give our utmost, not to be ungenerous in anything, and for me to be able to take the lead and help them. I want to pray for all the intentions that you are concerned about: the Church, her teachings, priests; and to do it well, by being cheerful and helping others by my good example.

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5. HERE I AM:

Path and mission

When Jesus saw Matthew at work as a tax-collector, he went over and called him, “Follow me!” He called Guadalupe like that too, in the middle of her ordinary work. “I think I’ve got a vocation,” was what Guadalupe said to St Josemaria when she first met him. And his reply encouraged her to seek God’s will: “I can’t tell you that straight off. If you want, I can be your spiritual director, hear your confessions and get to know you.” God calls, and the individual responds. Guadalupe aimed to respond to God with the same attitude as St Matthew: she too got up and followed Our Lord along the path he had prepared for her in Opus Dei. “If you ask me how one recognizes a divine calling, how one comes to a realization of it, I will tell you that it is a new view of life. It’s as if a light was lit within us; it is a mysterious impulse which urges one to devote one’s noblest energies to an activity which, with practice, begins to take on the nature of an occupation. That vital force, which is something like an avalanche sweeping everything before it, is what others call a vocation.”¹⁴⁰ These words by St Josemaria helped Guadalupe to understand what had happened to her.

Bilbao, 17 March 1946 ¹⁴¹

Dear Father,

How happy it makes me to tell you “Here I am,” now at the head of things, and tomorrow in the last place of all, always happy, because I’m serving Our Lord. Every day I trust more in his help and less in my own efforts, and so from the moment Nisa told me she was going,¹⁴² I prayed very hard to him not to leave me for a second. I want to carry the weight of the house on my shoulders together with him at every moment, and bring my sisters closer to him. [...]

Bilbao, 30 April 1947 ¹⁴³

Dear Father,

[...] As I always talk to you about how the house is coming along etc., today I'm going to be a bit selfish and talk about my own things. First, this Ascension Thursday it will be many years now since I came to live in the Work, and I want with all my soul to do [the Fidelity].¹⁴⁴ I'm praying very hard for it, and don't imagine that just because I'm very young in my way of acting, I don't realize what it is.

Father, I may have thousands of defects but I do have very great faith in my vocation and in God's help, I assure you, and I'm always ready to do whatever I'm asked, very happily. Sometimes things turn out wrong, as you know, but I put my whole self into it. [...]

Madrid, 17 May 1947 ¹⁴⁵

Dear Father,

This morning Don Pedro came to Zurbaran and told me I can do the Fidelity. I'm so happy! Pray very much that Our Lord will always be happy with me, and that I may learn to love him with my whole soul. [...] I don't know what to say, I'm really happy, filled with peace, and I owe it all to you and the Work, so I want to spend everything God has given me (health, cheerfulness, etc.) just in working very very hard.

I've also been told about the Advisory,¹⁴⁶ which hasn't made so much of an impression on me. Perhaps I'm not capable of realizing what it means yet. I only know that wherever you want me to be, I'm ready to obey, think, and work as much as I'm able to. [...]

Madrid, 31 August 1948 ¹⁴⁷

Dear Father,

Today our course ends.¹⁴⁸ As always, I think we're all full of good desires and resolutions to behave better. Over these days I've thought a lot about my defects; they are very big ones, but it makes me feel very tranquil to know that you and Don Jose Maria know them better than I do myself, and when I'm told about them in the confidence, I feel that

then is precisely when I am truly getting to know myself as Our Lord sees me. I used to be tremendously concerned to be sincere and I liked to interpret my own defects etc. when I talked about them. And if I didn't do that I felt I wasn't making myself known properly. Now I don't worry about all that any longer: I talk about the things I do or think, and I wait for the other person to tell me where I have to go on the attack, and if it's on something different from what I thought, I see that I was wrong and don't worry about it any further. I'd like to be so completely united to you through the person in charge that in the prayer that's almost the only thing I ask for. [...]

I love Our Lord very much indeed, although in the prayer I sometimes feel completely stupid, it's hard to pray and I think mostly about the problems of the house, vocations, etc. From time to time there are moments (when I least expect it) when I simply can't contain everything I feel, and I'm so happy that just remembering it afterwards gives me strength for the rest of the time when I don't feel anything at all.

Father, pray a lot for me, and for all these things – for the residence to be full this year and for the girls to be good ones! [...] For the girls we're doing apostolate with, and who could be holy, to make up their minds! For me to finish my doctorate now, although I'm studying so little! For me to be very docile in helping you all in whatever you ask of me this year! For me to help my sisters with my own good example! How much I love them all! I think I've now told you everything I wanted to, and I'm happy, really happy. Help me a lot, tell me everything I do wrong, point-blank; maybe that's the only good thing about me so far, that I've always taken it very well and been happy when people correct me (even though I'm sad that I've done things wrong), and I love the person who corrects me even more than before, and am really grateful to them.

Madrid, 16 May 1949 ¹⁴⁹

Dear Father,

This academic year is coming to an end. The girls in the residence are doing very well, they're happy and they're studying hard. [...] It's astonishing to see girls who, when you talk to them, though they don't really know the Work at all well, get enthused and even make up their

minds [to follow our path]. You can tell that Our Lord is doing the same with us as he did with the Apostles, when they came back full of wonder at all they'd accomplished.

But that doesn't mean I'm doing things well. I see more and more defects in myself. Now I am putting my best efforts into the norms,¹⁵⁰ and I'm starting to manage them. The prayer is usually a struggle not to get distracted, but there I am, and I know that I'm pleasing Our Lord like that.

But yesterday was one of those times when one sees everything quite clearly. I was praying for our new members (I had to give them the circle today), wanting them to become totally firm in their vocation (which is a grace God gave me right from the start, with never a second's doubt, perhaps because he saw I had less foundation than others) and, in front of the Tabernacle, I saw our way so clearly, so straight, so right for everyone who learns about it, has a heart, and wants to get close to God, that I understood with utter certainty that the only thing necessary in order to put down roots is to get to know the Work in depth.

Father, I sensed many things that I can't put into words, but I'm sure you understand them because you've experienced them thousands of times, just like I experienced them in those few moments. I left the oratory wanting to encompass the whole world. The apostolate thrills me, even though I usually find it very difficult too (I assure you) and sometimes I'd find it easier to carry trunks. [...]

Mexico D.F., 29 June 1950 ¹⁵¹

Dear Father,

Today I'd like to write to you a bit about myself; you know how, generally, I'm over-detached from myself and in my letters I tell you how things are going, which is really what fills my interior and external life; and only occasionally, like today, do I stop (or rather it's Our Lord who makes me stop so that, standing apart from everything, I see into the depths of my heart in a moment of time, and feel more grateful for the love of God that he himself is steadily putting in me). Yes, Father, I love God very much. More every day, more strongly and surely. Though, generally, I don't feel anything, but I notice it in the way I react to

things. So I need to feel it from time to time, so that I will see that the only thing that matters is to make an effort to maintain it, so that God himself will purify my life.

I want so much to serve him! – materially, by working as much as my body is capable of [...]; and spiritually, by giving myself totally and helping my sisters and all the people I do apostolate with, to give their utmost! That's the only thing that makes me suffer, my incapacity (because of my lack of... I don't know what, I can't judge myself and don't want to) to be more effective.

Father, though I'm so insensitive in every way, I break down when I see a lack of generosity, and sometimes (I recall two occasions right now) I couldn't help people seeing it, and I once started crying in front of one of them; and again in front of another, who had the question of her vocation clearly before her eyes, and so as not to surrender to Our Lord, wanted to commit an act of madness. At times like that, what hurts me is to see how little we love Our Lord, and I feel just as guilty as them, because I sincerely believe that if God didn't help me enormously, in their circumstances I'd be the same as them. (But that doesn't take away my inner peace at all, nor my certainty in my vocation, nor my confidence about persevering.) I don't know how to explain it to you.

Pray a lot for all the apostolate that can be done. The girls are completely open, but they need us to form them, help them, and lead them to God by the hand, and sometimes that's hard to do. Pray a lot for me; I feel small, much too small for this work, but I'm resolved to do it all by obeying. I'll be deeply sincere, I think that I don't fail to say anything that I think I ought to say. That's my relief, and thanks to that I'm completely happy. In my prayer, in the letters I write to you, and when I talk to Don Pedro, I unburden myself of everything that worries me and then I feel so much lighter and ready to take whatever Our Lord may lay on my shoulders.

Father, thank you for everything. Today, the feast of St Peter, I feel so united to the head, so given over to the Work, that I need to tell you so. Your letter was a great consolation to all of us; I know that you're always focused on us. Pray for me a lot, and forgive me for all that I've made you suffer before and now, even though sometimes without wanting to.

Mexico, D.F., 1 June 1951 ¹⁵²

Dear Father,

You can imagine how happy we are with Don Pedro's arrival,¹⁵³ and all the good news he brought. [...] Father, if you could only see how much your Mexican daughters want to meet you, you'd realize that even though we get masses of things wrong we do have a real spirit of filiation, because we've been able to pass it on and make it live so vividly in our sisters who've never yet met you. [...]

I can only be filled with wonder and thank God, through you, and at the same time ask you not to forget us, and to pray a lot for this daughter of yours who has more heart than head, to continue to be useful for as long as you think I should in this great apostolate. And pray that that may give me greater confidence every day, confidence that Our Lady will help me just as much now and afterwards, when these sisters of ours who have just joined the Work have grown, and I've been moved to a position of obscurity. If you only knew how often I think about that, and how peaceful it makes me feel!

Mexico D.F., 16 November 1952 ¹⁵⁴

Dear Father,

Last Sunday we had our first day of recollection for working women, in Copenhagen,¹⁵⁵ and 70 women and girls came. Don Pedro preached it. There were some wonderful people there. Don Juan Antonio heard many confessions before Mass. Everyone was delighted. [...] On Thursday we had a recollection for married women. 40 came. Another Supernumerary whistled.¹⁵⁶ There's a great atmosphere, and they can be helped very much indeed. It makes one sad to see the frivolous surroundings they live in, even the most devout and pious ones, so that they feel empty inside, and unhappy. They're looking for something more, and the Work is able to give it to them, right? Pray a lot for them and for me, because never in my life did I imagine I'd have to get mixed up in these things, and it's only by God's help that they entrust themselves to me, etc. Isn't that so? [...]

Mexico D.F., 28 February 1954 ¹⁵⁷

Dear Father,

[...] About myself, I don't know what to tell you; God is making everything work out without too much difficulty. But when I look inside myself it sometimes makes me feel sad (it's the only thing that does). You know me; I'm just a small creature, strong, cheerful, sometimes with a big heart but sometimes quite insensitive. In the Basilica of Guadalupe on 14 February, I begged Our Lady to help us as she has done up till now (because I don't think she could possibly help us more).

Your daughter, who can never express all that the Work and you yourself mean to me except by surrendering myself whole and entire, asks for your blessing. Father, here I am.

Mexico D.F., 12 December 1955 ¹⁵⁸

This morning Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was reserved permanently in the oratory of the centre of studies. It's got a picture of the Immaculate Conception (a big painting), and the altar is green and gilded marble (imitation marble, but it looks beautiful). The tabernacle is gilded wood and has a glass door. Everything was made in the workshop where Aurora is learning gilding and carving. Pray a lot for this house, for all the vocations who pass through it to persevere to the end and become very holy.

As today is my name-day, and no-one in Mexico ever ignores this feast-day, lots of people came to Mass here to pray for me at Communion; I could really tell that there were very many people praying for me, and I know that you prayed for me too, as well as all my sisters in many parts of the world. I also got a letter from my family: they all seem to be coming closer and closer to the Work. They sound really happy, especially Eduardo and Laurita (who are in the Work already). [...]

For all this, which God wants to bring about, as you say, the only thing necessary is personal holiness. I want to achieve that, but I realize I'm still missing a lot. I fulfil the norms,¹⁵⁹ I want to serve, I swallow my

bad temper (which is strong), I'm always happy, but from that to being a contemplative soul and a saint, there's still a long way to go; though I don't know which point I should be fighting on to achieve it. Pray for me very, very hard. I want to do everything as well as possible, but sometimes I mess things up – “no way”, as they say.

Pray a lot, too, for the oldest people in this region, so that we can do everything together. I know you don't want personal governance in the Work; nor does God; and nor do I, I assure you. And I make every effort to distribute responsibilities and do things the way everyone has agreed on, often surrendering my own judgment. Father, I've now been at the head of things for many years; wouldn't it be good for me to start being “at the foot” instead? But you know that here, or wherever you put me, I'll be happy serving God in the Work.

Montefalco (Mexico), 15 February 1956 ¹⁶⁰

Dear Father,

I'm writing from Montefalco, where I've come for a retreat for people in the Work. [...] It looks as if they've done a very good retreat, and that with God's help and yours a stage of expansion and spiritual deepening is going to begin in Mexico. You can't imagine how hard I'm begging God to grant it, for myself and for everyone! We need it. Spiritual guidance is now sorted out: there's a named priest to hear confessions in each centre, and all of us who are directors are taking on board the enormous responsibility we have to learn to be saints and help others to be saints. I'm very happy; in the Work you have some daughters who have a lot of good spirit and are docile; I think that nothing seems to them too much to do or to give.

At mealtimes we were reading the life of St John of the Cross, but none of the things he said scared us; and although our spirit is different, that doesn't mean that it's any easier – far from it. How clearly one sees that our self-giving (if we live it out well) is immense! It couldn't be any greater. [...]

Madrid, 28 May 1959 ¹⁶¹

Dear Father,

Yesterday Maria Elena was here, telling us lots of things about Rome in a get-together, and we had a wonderful time. She told us what she had heard from you and I tried to engrave everything on my memory: Fidelity, felicity, loyalty. I've tried to live that way ever since I joined the Work (over fifteen years ago now), with all my strength. Our Lord, you, and my directors know that, and I'll try to do so with more and more effort and determination. Opus Dei is me, and I couldn't live in any other way. How glad I am that I've always felt that so clearly right from the very first day, and progressively more as time goes on!

Father, pray a lot for all the apostolate with Cooperators. We're in touch with lots of good people from all kinds of backgrounds and there's a lot to do. And in the deprived districts, where we've set up health clinics and run catechism classes, we're helping the simple folk. Today there was a pilgrimage with a group of girls who meet on Sunday mornings and have a circle, in Valdebebas (they're working girls between 18 and 20) and you can see that they're coming closer to Our Lord.

I'm feeling very strong, Father, and I think that where I had the operation there won't be any further problems, so lay any burden on me – that's what this donkey is for.

Madrid, 7 February 1960 ¹⁶²

Dear Father,

Greetings for this date, together with my gratitude for everything I've received in the Work and my ever-greater love for you, my sisters and the work I have in hand, which I always feel is the best possible. [...]

Father, I was so happy to hear that the Central Advisory is now complete. I'm praying as hard as I can for all my sisters, their work of governance everywhere, and especially the St Gabriel apostolate. As always, I'm full of zest for what I'm doing now and for whatever I may be asked to do at any moment. You know, Father, that humanly speaking I'm a clumsy clot, but with God's help and the Work's there's nothing that scares me.

Madrid, 19 March 1960 ¹⁶³

Dear Father,

Today, the feast of St Joseph, I remembered you very especially and when at Mass [...] I renewed my fidelity under my breath, I asked Our Lord once again to grant me the human and divine loyalty that we learn to live by in the Work from the very first day, which as time goes by gets stronger and firmer. Yes, Father, that's how I experience it. One's freedom of spirit increases and so does one's certainty of final perseverance. I'd like to become more sensitive and faithful every day in big things and little, in externals and on the inside; in what everyone can see, which helps others, and in what is only seen by God and my [directors]¹⁶⁴ and you, because it makes me really happy that they and my Father know me as well as Our Lord does.

I also prayed for vocations, thousands of vocations, thousands of vocations all over the world, and specifically for the names of the people we're doing apostolate with. There are names that I never forget, and to help them, nothing is too much.

Father, you know me: if I have one ruling passion, it's [apostolate].¹⁶⁵ I think my zest for it gets bigger every day. It grows with the years and I enjoy seeing that, as you've often told us, age is no obstacle for doing direct St Raphael apostolate. And here I am again, re-living those moments when a girl gives her whole life to Our Lord. Pray for them. [...]

Madrid, 14 February 1963 ¹⁶⁶

Dear Father,

Today, as on every big feast-day,¹⁶⁷ I remembered you very especially. In a get-together with the people of the Work we recalled the early times, and once again I gave thanks for everything: for perseverance, which, as one feels more and more that one is following a well-trodden route, seems firmer all the time and brings immense peace. I gave thanks, and prayed for vocations. There are lots, but there need to be many more. I'm grateful to Our Lord for the gift of having always been surrounded by a great deal of apostolic work. I feel a bit like mothers whom God has given many children.

I am also grateful for this time of intensive formation. I love studying and teaching. Whether it's the philosophy classes, where I'm a student, or the physics and chemistry classes I teach in my job, I enjoy it all very much indeed.

Madrid, 19 March 1963 ¹⁶⁸

Dear Father,

I'm writing to you while doing my prayer. I look at Our Lord, remember you, and see myself on the inside. All are in agreement. I am at peace, with secure trust in Our Lord and in the Father (which for me also means the Work and my sisters, I can't separate them). And without even trying to I start giving thanks and making petitions.

Thank you for everything, Father; here I am, as always. I work, do apostolate, and pray as well as I can. I want to do it better, and if you remember to pray for me, perhaps I'll manage.

It's 19 years today since I wrote to you for the first time asking to be admitted to the Work, and I think I said almost the same things. And I hope to repeat it as a sort of refrain all my life long.

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Afterword

As stated at the beginning of this book, the last letter Guadalupe wrote to St Josemaria was on 22 June 1975. Three weeks previously she had been taken in to Navarre University Hospital for another high-risk heart operation. In the days leading up to the operation, Guadalupe lived with her usual degree of cheerful self-giving in her new situation. She wrote:

Dear Father,

I'm writing from hospital. I've been here for twenty-two days, and at the end of this month the cardiologists will decide whether to change my "heart valves". I'm quite calm and I'm not worried about what may happen. This year, up until I came here, I've been leading a normal life just like before (but I get a little more tired all the time). I'm still teaching at the training college and the school of domestic sciences, and I'm the director of Lista, the centre where I live.

I followed your catechesis in Latin America very closely.¹⁶⁹ How beautiful it all was! And I prayed for you constantly. I have a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe always with me, and that reminds me to pray for you, and her inscription, "God did not do this for any other nation" is especially meaningful for me, as I recall those countries.

I'm keeping in mind everything I know needs praying for, and what I imagine does. Help me to behave well in whatever God may want for me now.¹⁷⁰

On 26 June St Josemaria died suddenly in Rome. Guadalupe received the news with great sorrow but with the peace and joy that came from knowing that he was already rejoicing in God. She herself, a few days later, was to face her own death with the same serenity. During those days in hospital she always tried to calm the people looking after her, and at the same time she abandoned herself into God's hands with absolute trust. Although the outcome of her operation on 1 July seemed

satisfactory, during her convalescence she developed acute breathing problems. At sunrise on 16 July 1975 her heart stopped beating. That heart, even though worn out by disease, had always been filled with love for God and other people. She knew that her illness was “very deep-seated”, not only in the sense that it was serious, but also because it seemed to be the answer to the petition she had addressed to God for so many years: “Give me a big heart, O God.” God enlarged her heart so that her love for God and other people grew greater day by day, until she achieved the destiny she had always pursued.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Letter from Guadalupe to St Josemaria dated 29 June 1950, written from Mexico. AGP, GOL A-00376. “Don Pedro” was Fr Pedro Casciaro, one of the first members of Opus Dei. Ordained in Madrid in 1946, he played a major role in developing Opus Dei’s apostolate in Mexico.
- ² Guadalupe to St Josemaria, 21 July 1962, from Pamplona, Spain. AGP, GOL A-00474.
- ³ Msgr Fernando Ocariz, 9 June 2018, <https://opusdei.org/en-uk/article/pope-approves-miracle-beatification-guadalupe-ortiz-de-landazuri>.
- ⁴ Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, no. 817.
- ⁵ In Opus Dei, “Numeraries” are members who live in apostolic celibacy and are totally available to look after the Prelature’s apostolic works and the formation of other Opus Dei faithful. They normally live in Opus Dei Centres.
- ⁶ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 7.
- ⁷ AGP, GOL A-00003.
- ⁸ Nisa’s full name was Narcisa Gonzalez Guzman; she was the director of the Opus Dei centre where Guadalupe lived.
- ⁹ In the context of Guadalupe’s letters, her “sisters” means the other women in Opus Dei, since one of its characteristic features is its Christian family atmosphere.
- ¹⁰ The reading of the New Testament and some spiritual book is one of the practices of piety included in the spiritual plan of life recommended by St Josemaria to achieve constant conversation with God in daily life; see note 22 below.
- ¹¹ AGP, GOL A-00331.
- ¹² AGP, GOL A-00355.
- ¹³ Zurbaran was the first hall of residence for women university students set up under St Josemaria’s guidance. It opened in 1947.
- ¹⁴ AGP, GOL A-00360.
- ¹⁵ The “daily food average” is the average amount spent on food per person per day.

16 AGP, GOL A-00382.

17 Pope Pius XII.

18 The Cold War.

19 AGP, GOL A-00024.

20 AGP, GOL A-00430.

21 Fr Pedro Casciaro; see note 1.

22 The “norms” are the practices of Christian piety that Opus Dei faithful try to follow in order to “seek God, find him and converse with him constantly,” in St Josemaria’s words (AGP Po6 IV p. 606). This plan of life, drawn up by St Josemaria, includes among other things the Rosary and times of personal prayer, as well as acts of thanksgiving to God and short vocal prayers to Our Lady.

23 AGP, GOL A-00027.

24 AGP, GOL A-00030.

25 Guadalupe had had a heart operation for mitral stenosis on 19 July.

26 Encarnita Ortega, a member of Opus Dei’s central government in Rome at that time. Encarnita was born in Galicia, Spain, in 1920. When she was 20, she met St Josemaria and discovered her vocation to Opus Dei. She put all her human and professional talents at God’s service. She worked with St Josemaria in the government of Opus Dei in Rome for several years. Returning to Spain, she directed Christian formational projects for women and helped with fashion and culture activities. She died with a reputation for holiness in Pamplona, Spain, in 1995.

27 AGP, GOL A-00454.

28 Guadalupe’s brother Eduardo Ortiz de Landazuri was born in Segovia, Spain, on 31 October 1910. He took a degree in medicine in Madrid. He married Laurita Busca Otaegui on 17 June 1941. In September 1958 he joined the newly-established Faculty of Medicine at the University of Navarre, and worked there and at Navarre University Hospital until he retired. Eduardo paid great attention to caring for his family and seeking God through his work as a doctor and university lecturer. He died with a reputation for holiness in 1985. The cause for his canonization was opened on 11 December 1998, and that of his wife Laurita on 14 June 2013.

29 The “St Gabriel apostolate” is the formational and apostolic work done by the Opus Dei prelate among working people and parents of families.

30 Montelar is an Opus Dei centre in Madrid, which at that time was the location of a Home Economics and Art training centre.

- 31 St Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 131.
- 32 AGP, GOL A-00002.
- 33 The “*dignior*” was the name given at that time to assistant directors in Opus Dei centres. In 1945, the date of this letter, Opus Dei had not yet received its final form in Canon Law. When it did, becoming a Personal Prelature, several terms used in the context of Opus Dei were altered.
- 34 Carmen Gutierrez Rios was assistant director of the centre where Guadalupe was living.
- 35 Nisa: see note 8 above.
- 36 “The confidence” is the spiritual accompanying where people in Opus Dei receive guidance and advice for their spiritual journey.
- 37 AGP, GOL A-00321.
- 38 “Don Alvaro”: Blessed Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid in 1914. He joined Opus Dei in 1935 and became a rock of support to St Josemaria, living and working with him as his right-hand man for almost forty years. He was ordained a priest on 25 June 1944 and from then on dedicated himself entirely to his pastoral ministry, in the service of Opus Dei faithful and all souls.
- 39 With the permission of the local Bishop, Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament had been reserved in the Tabernacle of the oratory of the centre where they were living.
- 40 AGP, GOL A-00324.
- 41 Plan of life: see note 22 above.
- 42 A figure of the Child Jesus was customarily placed in the oratory during the Christmas season.
- 43 AGP, GOL A-00005.
- 44 Fr Jose Maria Hernandez Garnica was born in Madrid in 1913. A priest, a mining engineer with doctorates in natural sciences and theology, he worked with St Josemaria in spreading Opus Dei throughout Europe, with notable joy and in a spirit of sacrifice. His cause of canonization was opened in February 2005.
- 45 “The circle” is a regular series of classes providing practical orientation for Christian living.
- 46 AGP, GOL A-00318.
- 47 AGP, GOL A-00335.

48 St Josemaria's graphic expression was a colloquialism meaning any kind of harm. Guadalupe is simply talking about being happy and close to God in spite of any difficulties.

49 AGP, GOL A-00335.

50 AGP, GOL A-00008.

51 See note 22 above.

52 AGP, GOL A-00009.

53 AGP, GOL A-00346.

54 AGP, GOL A-00011.

55 AGP, GOL A-00352.

56 Recollections, retreats, or spiritual exercises, are a religious practice where people leave their ordinary activities for a few hours, a few days, or longer, in order to converse with God about spiritual matters and progress in holiness.

57 AGP, GOL A-00044.

58 AGP, GOL A-00361.

59 AGP, GOL A-00017.

60 See note 22 above.

61 AGP, GOL A-00373.

62 "The Fidelity" is the definitive incorporation into the Opus Dei prelatore that its faithful can make not less than five years after their first temporary incorporation.

63 AGP, GOL A-00022.

64 AGP, GOL A-00498.

65 See note 22 above.

66 Centres of Studies are set up in each region of the Opus Dei prelatore, offering all the faithful in that region the ongoing formation in religious doctrine that they need in order to keep up their spiritual life and pursue the apostolic goals of the prelatore.

67 AGP, GOL A-00028.

68 In the original, Guadalupe uses a forceful Mexican colloquialism, “*ni modo*”, meaning that there is nothing to be done about it.

69 See note 36 above.

70 Guadalupe uses the colloquial “*siendo el ultimo mono*”, literally “being the last monkey”, meaning being insignificant and of no account.

71 AGP, GOL A-00029.

72 Guadalupe was going to travel to Rome to take part in an Ordinary General Congress of Opus Dei. The aim of these Congresses is to examine the work done since the previous Congress and offer suggestions to the Prelate for the evangelizing activities of the faithful of the Prelature, to make their service to the universal Church and particular Churches better and more fruitful.

73 AGP, GOL A-00465.

74 AGP, GOL A-00474.

75 See note 56 above. St Josemaria recommended spending a few hours once a month meditating on various aspects of Christian living in order to keep up the momentum obtained from the retreat.

76 The “annual course” is a short yearly period of formation and theology study. The subjects studied on these courses are equivalent to the two-year philosophy programmes and four-year theology programmes taught at the Pontifical Universities in Rome. St Josemaria paid special attention to the training in religious doctrine of the people of Opus Dei, ensuring that it was tailored to the specific circumstances of each member.

77 The word “proselytism” comes from “proselyte”, a Biblical term for a convert to Judaism. The Church adopted both words in connection with conversion to Christianity, or joining a specific group within the Church. Many spiritual authors, including St Josemaria, used the term “proselytism” in this sense, meaning apostolate or evangelization characterized by deep respect for freedom. This is very different from the negative meaning acquired by the word “proselytism” towards the end of the 20th century.

78 See note 22 above.

79 AGP, GOL A 0476.

80 See note 30 above.

81 “The St Raphael apostolate” is the apostolate of giving Christian formation to young people.

82 “The Advisory”: in governing Opus Dei, the Prelate is helped by one council of women, called the Central Advisory, and one of men, called the General Council. Both are based in Rome. In addition, since the prelature is distributed in areas or territories known as “regions”, which may or may not be coterminous with specific countries, at the head of each region is a Regional Vicar who also has two councils: the regional advisory for women and the regional commission for men. At the time of writing this letter Guadalupe was living in the centre of the regional advisory in Spain.

83 AGP, GOL A-00042.

84 AGP, GOL A-00044.

85 Guadalupe was doing her annual course: see note 76 above.

86 “The Last Things”, in Christian spirituality, are the things that each person faces at the end of their life: death, judgement, purgatory, and hell or heaven.

87 St Josemaria wrote a letter to all the members of Opus Dei dated 28 March 1973. With fatherly concern, he encouraged them to renew their faithfulness to God and the Church in those times of confusion in some spheres of Church life.

88 Josemaria Escrivá, *Furrow*, no. 795.

89 AGP, GOL A-00328.

90 AGP, GOL A-00328.

91 AGP, GOL A-00330.

92 See note 62 above.

93 AGP, GOL A-00332.

94 The expression Guadalupe uses is “*soy la más ‘gansa’*”.

95 The “particular exam” in the spiritual life is a specific point on which the person fights to improve, in order to acquire a virtue or root out a defect.

96 AGP, GOL A-00334.

97 AGP, GOL A-00337.

98 AGP, GOL A-00340.

99 AGP, GOL A-00345.

100 The annual course. See note 76 above.

101 AGP, GOL A-00022.

- 102 AGP, GOL A-00026.
- 103 See note 22 above.
- 104 The Roman College of Holy Mary is an interregional centre for the formation of women in Opus Dei, set up by St Josemaria in Rome.
- 105 AGP, GOL A-00462.
- 106 “2 October”: the anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei by St Josemaria, while he was on retreat in Madrid in 1928.
- 107 See notes 30 and 81, above.
- 108 AGP, GOL A-00463.
- 109 See note 30 above.
- 110 The St Raphael circles are short, practical classes of Christian formation for young people, in which they learn to practise the natural and supernatural virtues, so as to grow into men and women of prayer and lead a more Christian life.
- 111 “Receive spiritual guidance”: talk regularly with a priest or experienced and well-informed lay person about the state of their interior life, in order to receive suggestions for improving their Christian life and relationship with God.
- 112 AGP, GOL A-00471.
- 113 AGP, GOL A-00485.
- 114 AGP, GOL A-00322.
- 115 AGP, GOL A-00326.
- 116 AGP, GOL A-00357.
- 117 AGP, GOL A-00358.
- 118 In this context, “tension” means intensity of effort to attain a goal.
- 119 AGP, GOL A-00359.
- 120 AGP, GOL A-00362.
- 121 See note 22 above.
- 122 AGP, GOL A-00432.
- 123 AGP, GOL A-00025.

124 “Eliminate myself”: in the sense of cutting herself out of the picture, with regard to the various responsibilities.

125 AGP, GOL A-00449.

126 AGP, GOL A-00475.

127 The “General Study” was the “Studium Generale de Navarra” which later became the University of Navarre.

128 Cooperators are men and women who, without joining the Opus Dei Prelature, help its apostolates in different ways in order to spread the message of Christ.

129 AGP, GOL A-00037.

130 The Foundation for the Sick (*Patronato de Enfermos*) was a charitable project set up by Luz Rodriguez Casanova, founder of the religious congregation known as the “Damas Apostolicas”. St Josemaria was the chaplain of the Foundation for the Sick from June 1927 to 28 October 1931.

131 “Whistle” was Madrid slang at that time for “do very well”; here Guadalupe means that her student joined the Work.

132 AGP, GOL A-00326.

133 The letter accompanied a copy of Guadalupe’s doctoral thesis which she had just defended successfully in Madrid.

134 AGP, GOL A-00039.

135 AGP, GOL A-00040.

136 “Centre of studies”: see note 66 above.

137 AGP, GOL A-00484.

138 AGP, GOL A-00044.

139 AGP, GOL A-00045.

140 Letter from St Josemaria dated 9 January 1932, quoted in Andres Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. I, p. 227.

141 AGP, GOL A-00004.

142 Nisa (see note 8 above) was the director of the Opus Dei centre in Bilbao. When Nisa moved back to Madrid, Guadalupe became the director.

143 AGP, GOL A-00343.

- 144 In the original, Guadalupe simply writes “that”, referring to the Fidelity; see note 62 above.
- 145 AGP, GOL A-00010.
- 146 Guadalupe had just been appointed to work on the governance of Opus Dei.
- 147 AGP, GOL A-00013.
- 148 The annual course: see note 76 above.
- 149 AGP, GOL A-00015.
- 150 See note 22 above.
- 151 AGP, GOL A-00376.
- 152 AGP, GOL A-00385.
- 153 Don Pedro Casciaro: see note 1 above.
- 154 AGP, GOL A-00402.
- 155 Copenhagen: the name of the first hall of residence for women university students opened by people of Opus Dei in Mexico.
- 156 See note 131 above.
- 157 AGP, GOL A-00499.
- 158 AGP, GOL A-00447.
- 159 See note 22 above.
- 160 AGP, GOL A-00448.
- 161 AGP, GOL A-00460.
- 162 AGP, GOL A-00376.
- 163 AGP, GOL A-00032.
- 164 Guadalupe wrote *mis superiores*, “my superiors”. When Guadalupe wrote this letter, Opus Dei was not yet a Personal Prelature, but was lumped together with Secular Institutes in canon law. Hence certain terms were then used which differed from those in use today (see also note 33 above). The term “superiors” is more appropriate to the context of professed religious and consecrated life, and obscures the reality of the completely lay nature of a personal prelature. See further A. de Fuenmayor, V. Gomez-Iglesias and J. L. Illanes, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, Scepter, 1994.

165 In the original Guadalupe wrote “proselytism”; see note 77 above.

166 AGP, GOL A-00036.

167 14 February is the anniversary of the days when St Josemaria understood deep in his soul that God was also calling women (1930) and priests (1943) to be and do Opus Dei.

168 AGP, GOL A-00477.

169 St Josemaria made a pastoral trip through different countries of Latin America in the first months of 1975.

170 Letter dated 22 June 1975, from Pamplona. AGP, GOL A-00046.

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