

GOD, Money and Power

Opus Dei, portrayed as a murderous Catholic sect in *The Da Vinci Code*, counts CEOs among its members, runs a network of business schools—and promotes the church's agenda.

By Vernon Silver and Michael Smith

◀ In the basement of a six-story concrete building on the outskirts of Rome, young men and women dressed in suits scurry around a simulated office with partitioned cubicles, fetching documents from laser printers and hashing out business presentations. The fake corporate environment has a name: Junior Consulting. Along with the companion Centro ELIS trade school upstairs, it's the brainchild of Opus Dei, the Roman Catholic group that Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* (Doubleday, 2003) portrayed as a killer cult conspiring with the Vatican to hide the true origins of Christianity.

Far from Brown's fictional world, Opus Dei says its image should be that of MBAs, not the book's murderous monk. The 78-year-old group of priests and laypeople has 84,000 members in more than five dozen countries and counts top executives, political leaders in Latin America and a U.K. cabinet official

Opus Dei CFO **Pablo Elton** advises local foundations.

among its ranks. It's seeking more high-powered members by funding pizza parties and seminars on embryonic research, physician-assisted suicide and evolution near U.S. Ivy League campuses. And it's targeting lawyers and bankers through monthly meetings at St. Mary Moorfields church in the City of London financial district.

Opus Dei promotes Roman Catholic Church policy. It opposes abortion and the ordination of women. The group says its goal is to spread a credo that working hard brings people closer to God. Some members, such as Eduardo Guilisasti, chief executive officer of Santiago-based Viña Concha y Toro SA, Latin America's biggest winery, advance the effort by giving their entire paycheck to help run Opus Dei's more than 100 technical and management schools from Spain to Mexico, to Vietnam, Guilisasti says. Cisco Systems Inc., the world's largest maker of computer networking equipment; Vodafone Group Plc, the biggest mobile phone service company by market value; and Nokia Oyj, the top cell phone maker, all sponsor courses at Centro ELIS. Students there have designed a business plan for Vodafone's Mobile Interactive TV and assessed the quality of computer images for Hewlett-Packard Co., the world's No. 2 personal computer maker.

Opus Dei's emphasis on recruiting and training businesspeople sets it apart from other Catholic groups, says Keith Pecklers, a Jesuit priest and professor of theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. "Opus Dei is unique," he says. "Their approach is finding God in daily life as a Christian, and a big part of that is the business world."

Not everyone accepts that Opus Dei's goal is purely spiritual. Dianne DiNicola says the group is out to recruit future executives, separate them from their families and then take their money. "They proselytize educated, bright people—you're talking doctors, lawyers, corporate types," says DiNicola, executive director of the Opus Dei Awareness Network in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The group publicizes Opus Dei's practices, which it says restrict members' personal freedoms. DiNicola, 63, founded ODAN after her daughter, Tammy, joined and then quit Opus Dei when she was a student at Boston College. "They get these subtle controls in places where it counts," DiNicola says.

Opus Dei recruits people who have a potential to succeed professionally, both for their influence and their money, DiNicola says, based in part on her daughter's experience as a numerary, a type of member who is celibate and lives in Opus Dei residences. About 30 percent of the people in Opus Dei swear off sex. The rest, known as supernumeraries, live in their own homes, often raising families. "She even had to write down if she bought a postage stamp; that's how controlling they are on money," DiNicola says. Recruits can become big earners for Opus Dei. "Say they have a salary of \$200,000; they'll give most of it to Opus Dei," she says.

'Their approach is finding God in daily life as a Christian, and a big part of that is the business world,' a Jesuit priest says.

Such complaints almost always come from former numeraries, who as celibates make the biggest commitment when joining and may go through the most stress when leaving, says Opus Dei spokesman Manuel Sánchez in Rome. "Some people who have left Opus Dei, they rethink what they've done and the things they loved," he says. "Excuse us and pardon us if there's something that didn't go well." He says it's standard for members to give Opus Dei as much money as they can afford.

Concha y Toro's Guilisasti, 53, who declined to disclose his salary, says he has no need for wealth. Opus Dei makes sure he has enough for clothing, food and gasoline for the 2002 Subaru he drives to his company's headquarters along the banks of the Mapocho River in Santiago. "What would I do with money?" Guilisasti asks, seated in his wood-paneled office, where he keeps a framed photograph of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the Spanish priest who founded Opus Dei in 1928, inside his desk. "It's not important to my life."

Like other numeraries, Guilisasti is celibate and lives in an Opus Dei home with group members. In one aspect of the novel that crosses into reality, Opus Dei numeraries participate in regular "mortification." In a weekly ritual, numeraries whip themselves on the back with a small switch while saying a prayer. For a few hours each day, they wear a band with inward-pointing spikes, known as a *cilice*, around their thighs. It can leave red marks and scars.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Opus Dei and the Vatican are covering up the story of early Christianity, including the secret that Jesus fathered a family. The secret is guarded by a society known as the Priory of Sion, whose "grand masters" have included Leonardo da Vinci. A monk, guided by the head of Opus Dei, goes on a killing spree to keep the secret under wraps. On April 7, a London court cleared Brown of allegations he plagiarized the plot from the nonfiction book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (Jonathan Cape, 1982) by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln.

"The conspiratorial theories about Opus Dei are ridiculous, but you might say the goals are beyond the church," says James Hitchcock, a professor who teaches Catholic Church history at Saint Louis University in Missouri. "It's the idea of influencing society from within, quietly, by utilizing whatever professional influence you have."

Within the church, Opus Dei has become increasingly prominent over the past two decades. Pope John Paul II, who died in April 2005, made Opus Dei the church's only personal prelature in 1982, meaning that, with a few exceptions, its members report to Opus Dei leaders in Rome rather than to local dioceses. In 2002, John Paul presided over the canonization of Escrivá just 27 years after the priest's death—the fastest saint-making process in modern times. Joaquín Navarro-Valls, the pope's spokesman, is an Opus Dei member, as are 41 of the church's 4,662 bishops and two of its 192 cardinals. Among



1997. Opus Dei is reaching out to City of London bankers and lawyers, Soane says.

In the U.S., Opus Dei completed its 17-story, \$69 million Manhattan headquarters at Lexington Avenue and 34th Street in 2001, a bricks-and-mortar announcement that the group had arrived in the world's financial capital. To target the nation's brightest students, Opus Dei runs off-campus housing and centers around Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island; and Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey.

Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, left, who founded Opus Dei in 1928, gave a sermon in Barcelona in 1972. Below is his statue in Rome.

them is Julián Cardinal Herranz Casado, president of the Vatican council that interprets religious law.

"John Paul liked Opus Dei very much, and he liked that they agreed with him on doctrinal issues," says Thomas Reese, a Jesuit priest appointed in March as a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Woodstock Theological Center in Washington. Specifically, he was referring to opposing abortion, contraception and marriage by priests. More than such policies, which are backed by many Catholic groups, Opus Dei's pro-business stance and ability to rally supporters among laypeople endeared Opus Dei to John Paul, especially during his Cold War push to topple Communism, Reese says. "This is an organization that can turn out 100,000 people in St. Peter's Square to cheer the pope and his policies, and it has these people all over the world," he says.

The Vatican's stamp of approval gives Opus Dei clout in the highest levels in mostly Catholic South America. In Brazil, the world's largest Catholic country, São Paulo Governor Geraldo Alckmin, a presidential candidate in October's elections, seeks spiritual counsel about once a month on economics, labor relations and religion from Opus Dei leader Carlos Di Franco. Alckmin has said to Di Franco, Opus Dei's communications director in Brazil, that he's not a member of Opus Dei. In Chile, Joaquín Lavín, Santiago's former mayor and a losing presidential candidate last year, is an Opus Dei member.

Opus Dei, which means "the work of God" in Latin, is expanding from strongholds in South America, Italy and Spain to the English-speaking world. U.K. Education Secretary Ruth Kelly is an Opus Dei supernumerary, says Andrew Soane, a chartered accountant and a London-based member of Opus Dei's U.K. regional council, which runs the group's affairs there. Former Bank of England economist Kelly, 38, was elected to Parliament in



Opus Dei residences, which aren't affiliated with the universities, are open to students who don't live in dorms.

John Wauck, a Harvard graduate who's now an Opus Dei priest in Rome, fulfilled the first-year requirement to live in a dormitory and then moved into Opus Dei's Elmbrook Student Center. For nonresidents, the centers offer pizza dinners, prayer meetings and talks on topics such as "Plotting a Pro-Life Legal Strategy." Recruiting on campuses and running business schools increase the odds that Opus Dei will have company executives as members, Opus Dei Chief Financial Officer Pablo Elton says. "If we're working with students, 30 years later they'll be CEOs," he says.

Some former numeraries who joined as students describe what they call cultlike experiences. In Brazil, Antonio Carlos Brolezzi spent 10 years living in an Opus Dei residence in São Paulo. A decade later, he says Opus Dei uses deception and secrecy to lure innocent youth into worshipping money and repressing their sexuality. Brolezzi, 41, a University of São

Corporate connections

The IESE Business School in Spain, founded by Opus Dei, gets funds from some of the world's biggest companies. The school's advisers include executives from international firms.

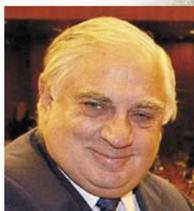
Advisory board member



Rolf Breuer
Former chairman,
Deutsche Bank



Marjorie Scardino
CEO,
Pearson



Peter Sutherland
Chairman,
Goldman Sachs Intl., BP

Funded professorial chair



Telecommunications
equipment



Automaker



Accounting
firm



Source: IESE Business School's Web site

Paulo statistics professor, says he didn't start recovering from what he called the "trauma" until he wrote a book about his time as a member, which was published this year. "The life of a numerary is like a slave's," says Brolezzi, who married after leaving Opus Dei and has a 2-year-old daughter.

At age 18, Brolezzi says he attended lectures about astronomy that turned out to be recruiting meetings for Opus Dei. At 19 and a virgin, he moved into an Opus Dei house for numeraries. "They really try to replace your family," Brolezzi says. Control was personal and financial. He gave his salary to Opus Dei, and when he confessed to fantasizing about women, the center's director ordered Brolezzi to wear tight-fitting pants that were hard to remove, to discourage masturbation. Getting out of Opus Dei was difficult, he says, partly because he had no savings. "I don't think I will ever recover financially from Opus Dei," he says. "I gave 10 years of my most-productive years to Opus Dei without earning a cent."

Opus Dei spokesman Sánchez says the group doesn't publicly contest grievances of former members. "An experience is subjective," he says.

Taking members' money isn't the group's objective and having executives among its ranks isn't a particular point of pride, Elton says. "What's important is that their work is in service to other people," he says.

Elton, speaking in Opus Dei's Rome headquarters, says *The Da Vinci Code* has heightened scrutiny of his work and caused him to be more open about Opus Dei's activities. It has also led Opus Dei and some Catholic groups to counter-attack. Opus Dei has asked Sony Corp. to include a disclaimer in the film adaptation stating that the thriller, which stars Tom Hanks and which was directed by Ron Howard, is entirely fictional. Opus Dei introduced a revamped Web site in March and moved some staff from its information office in Rome to New York to coordinate its media response to the movie. One piece of the message is that Opus Dei has no monks, contrary to the depiction in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Part of Opus Dei's strategy in countering the movie is to open its schools and residences to news reporters and to have members grant interviews to tell the story of Opus Dei and its history. The founder of Opus Dei, who was born in 1902 in Barbastro, Spain, learned the perils of entrepreneurship as a child. Escrivá's father, José, ran a textile company that failed 13 years later, forcing the family to move to the city of Logroño in northern Spain for José to seek work, according to Escrivá's official biography. When young Josemaría decided to become a priest, he followed his father's advice and also trained as a lawyer.

Escrivá, who was ordained in 1925, was working on his law doctorate in Madrid when he said God showed him his mission: to found Opus Dei. Escrivá outlined those views in his book of aphorisms, *El Camino*, or *The Way*, which was first published in 1934 and translated into at least 43 languages. "An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer," he wrote. He'd just started to build the group when the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 forced him to flee the anti-clerical Republicans



Eduardo Guilisasti, CEO of Latin America's largest winery, donates all of his income to Opus Dei.

in Madrid for France. He returned to Spain during the rule of dictator Francisco Franco in 1939.

Opus Dei began its international push in 1946 when Escrivá moved to Rome and the group set up in Italy, Portugal and the U.K. In 1965, Escrivá and Pope Paul VI opened the technical school on the outskirts of Rome on land the Vatican donated. Called Centro ELIS—*ELIS* stands for the Italian words for *education, work, training* and *sport*—the Opus Dei school became a model for projects worldwide. Opus Dei members say education has been key to its corporate aspirations. Opus Dei's Universidad de los Andes in Santiago provides graduate courses to students who have already made their way up the corporate ladder. The school admits only managers at the division-head level and higher. "The owner of a company can influence decisions more than a simple employee," says Alberto Lopez-Hermida, 67, director general of the university's business school, which has just moved into a \$10 million building in the arid Andean Mountain foothills.

Guilisasti says he decided to join Opus Dei in 1968 after becoming spellbound by a priest's talk during high school in Santiago. Today, he lives with eight men in Santiago's affluent Las Condes neighborhood. So-called administrators, or female Opus Dei numeraries, take care of the cooking and cleaning. Opus Dei says it treats male and female members equally and says women should be politically active in society. It also considers men and women to have different natural abilities, according to Opus Dei's Web site. Opus Dei says housekeeping and child rearing are tasks in pursuit of holiness in the same ways as office work.

Opus Dei has foundations that fund efforts for the church's positions, such as opposing abortion and supporting marriage.

has been around for hundreds of years in many different forms. It's really just a mild discomfort."

Opus Dei, which is governed from Rome and funded locally, requires members such as Guilisasti to finance its centers and find money to run the schools and projects they start. Members cover the living expenses of Opus Dei priests who are assigned to each region to conduct Mass, hear confession and provide clerical services. The members donate either to the centers or to foundations set up to fund Opus Dei activities, according to members

and U.S. tax returns. Guilisasti has willed all of his assets, including his share of his family's 26 percent, \$265 million stake in Concha y Toro, to Opus Dei foundations.

Elton says that even with donations from members and from the scores of foundations that support Opus Dei, the organization isn't rich. He says the only accounting he has seen of the group's assets is a \$2.8 billion estimate for Opus Dei and its branches, which he says is a small amount compared with the \$102 billion of revenue that Catholic programs in the U.S. reported

in 2001. "That helped explain an important theme—that numbers aren't the most important thing in Opus Dei," Elton says in his Rome office, which has a desk with a computer, a round table, a wardrobe and a door that leads to a bedroom with a single bed that's covered with a floral bedspread.

Elton's role is to advise local Opus Dei branches and foundations on how to establish endowment funds and to set investment guidelines, which he says are conservative. The directors of each foundation invest the money themselves. "We don't go on adventures with hedge funds," Elton says,

"I give thanks to God often on seeing how the women of Opus Dei work in every sector of society: running corporations and hospitals, working in fields and in factories, holding university chairs," Opus Dei's prelate, or leader, Bishop Javier Echevarría says on the group's Web site.

Opus Dei members also work at home. In addition to running Concha y Toro, Guilisasti polices Opus Dei rules at the group house where he lives. One regulation bars numeraries from watching "immoral" movies on television, he says. A practice of self-flagellation outlined in *The Da Vinci Code* forms part of his routine of daily "mortification," which reminds him of the suffering Christ endured on the cross. "A lot is made of mortification," says Di Franco, who wears a *cilice* for two hours a day. "This

laughing. The group's local foundations and branches don't send him financial statements, although he's generally aware of their activities, he says.

One such foundation, New York-based Clover Foundation, reported assets of \$31.3 million at the end of 2004. Of that sum, it invested \$12.1 million in stocks, \$10.5 million in corporate bonds and \$5.93 million in municipal and U.S. government bonds, according to its 2004 tax return. It used part of its money to build and renovate schools in Mexico and Nigeria. It also spent \$50,000 to study the legal status of embryos, a topic that's central to the church's anti-abortion efforts; run a conference on the importance of marriage; and support unspecified postgraduate research at Princeton University, according to the tax return.

Opus Dei's Woodlawn Foundation, based in New Rochelle, New York, reported assets of \$12.5 million at the end of 2004. It invested \$3.87 million in mutual funds and stocks that year. Woodlawn acts as a clearinghouse for channeling donations into Opus Dei activities. It received \$11.4 million in gifts and distributed \$11 million to 45 Opus Dei centers, schools and offices in 2004, according to its tax return. Woodlawn gave \$1.23 million to Murray Hill Place Inc., which owns Opus Dei's U.S. headquarters in New York.

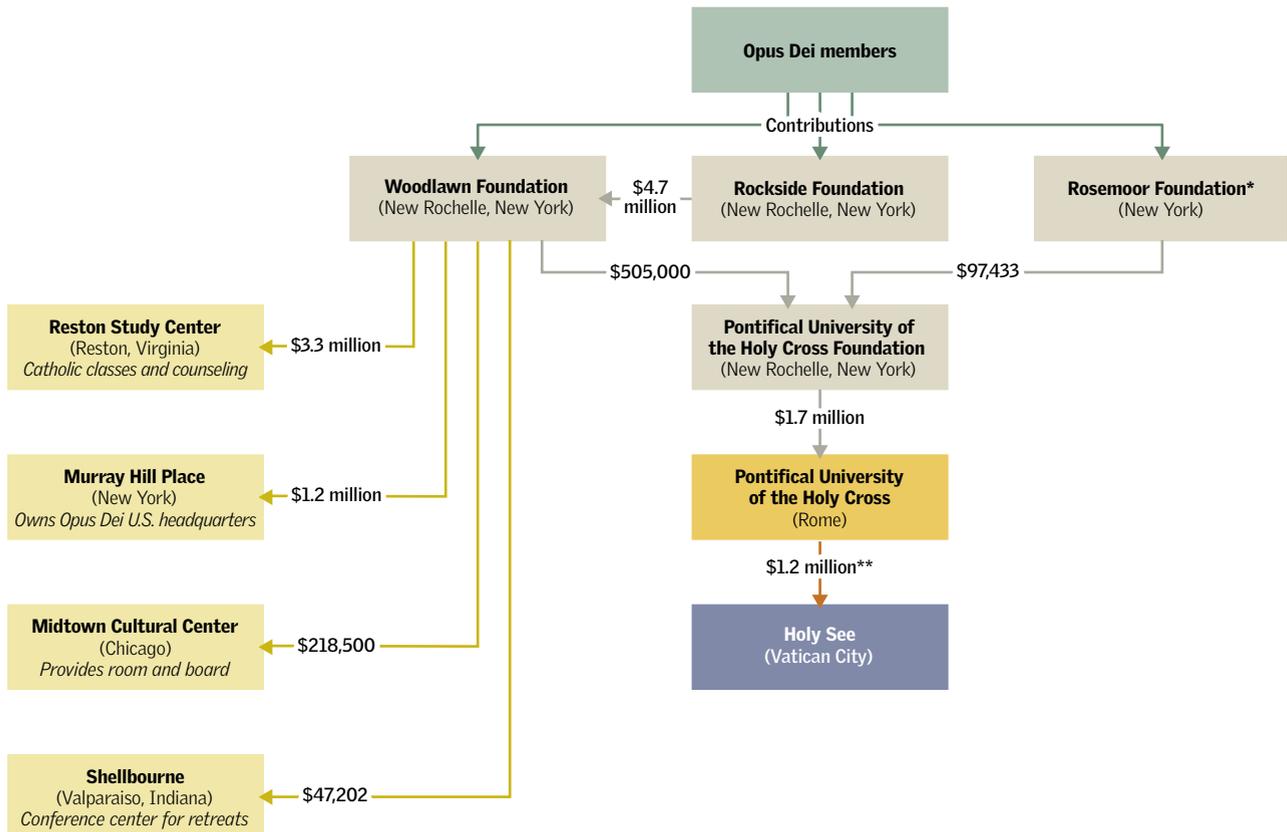
Because of ongoing fund raising, Centro ELIS is a 4-hectare (9.9-acre) oasis in a run-down neighborhood of concrete apartment blocks on Rome's eastern fringe. It includes a 200-bed dormitory, green playing fields and classes sponsored by some of the world's biggest companies. The school houses its original welding shops as well as computer networking labs and a business training program for men and women who have just graduated from universities. It also has a Catholic chapel, in which Mass is said a few times a year.

Centro ELIS has received about 800,000 euros (\$985,000) in Italian government funds to spawn at least 16 similar schools in China, Ecuador, Uruguay, Vietnam and other countries, says Pierluigi Bartolomei, director of Centro ELIS's technical school. In Hanoi, Centro ELIS set up a mechanic school that has a partnership with Hameco, a 48-year-old Vietnamese maker of industrial equipment, according to the Centro ELIS Web site.

Opus Dei establishes such schools through its L'Associazione Centro ELIS, which competes with other nongovernmental organizations for Italian Foreign Ministry funding. When the Centro ELIS association wins contracts, it sends staff, who are usually Opus Dei members, to start the schools

New York to Rome

Opus Dei members manage their operations—largely schools and residences. Here's an example of how New York foundations distributed donations to U.S. centers and a university in Rome that makes payments to the Vatican.



*Also received \$17600 from Shellbourne and \$2,200 from the Midtown Cultural Center and contributed \$523,583 to Murray Hill Place. **Annual rent. Source: Opus Dei, 2004 U.S. tax returns

and turn them over to local administrators or the local governments, Bartolomei says. The schools don't overtly flaunt their Opus Dei connection, other than creating an environment that fosters work and economic development, Bartolomei says. "When we have an institute like this, we don't wear a cross on our chests or carry a Vatican flag," he says.

Opus Dei also keeps a low profile at its IESE Business School. The school, which has campuses in Madrid and Barcelona, is a branch of the University of Navarra. Escrivá founded the Pamplona, Spain-based university in 1952. Some executives say they had no idea they were associated with Opus Dei's activities. "I know nothing about the Opus Dei connection," says Peter Sutherland, chairman of both Goldman Sachs International and BP Plc, Europe's biggest oil company, who is a member of IESE's international advisory board. "It's ranked one of the top two or three business schools in Europe," Sutherland says.

Like Centro ELIS, IESE is cultivating corporate connections. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, one of the Big Four U.S. accounting firms, funds the jobs of some of the school's professors. Nissan Motor Co., Japan's No. 2 automaker; Alcatel SA, the world's second-largest supplier of telecommunications networks; and Banco Santander Central Hispano SA, Spain's biggest bank, also provide funding, according to IESE's Web site.

Citigroup Inc., the world's biggest financial services company, and Morgan Stanley, the third-biggest U.S. securities firm by market value, are listed as "supporting companies." The school says such support helps develop research programs, train

faculty and finance scholarships and construction. Citigroup has sponsored student activities and backed events in IESE's MBA program, says Eric Weber, IESE's associate dean for executive education and an Opus Dei supernumerary.

"Part of the revolutionary character of Opus Dei is work and economics acting for the pursuit of holiness," says Wauck, 42, who teaches a course on literature and the communication of the faith at Opus Dei's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross off Rome's Piazza Navona.

Across town in the office of Junior Consulting, there are signs that Opus Dei's work there has the approval of at least one higher authority. On April 10, most of the students trekked to Vatican City to join 3,500 youths from Opus Dei schools worldwide for an audience with Pope Benedict XVI. Benedict greeted them in the Vatican's audience hall, spoke of the importance of friendship and quoted from *The Way*. He closed with a blessing. "May the Holy Virgin help you," he said. "And may Saint Josemaría intercede on your behalf." The students presented Benedict with a chocolate cake to mark his 79th birthday.

With friends like that, it's no wonder Opus Dei's leaders are confident *The Da Vinci Code* won't stop them from attracting and training students and executives and winning financing from some of the world's largest corporations. ▶

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BLOOMBERG TOOLS

Tracking an Opus Dei Member's Company

Eduardo Guilisasti, CEO of Viña Concha y Toro, is a member of Opus Dei. Committed to celibacy, the 53-year-old lives in an Opus Dei center in Santiago and turns all of his compensation over to the Catholic group.

Guilisasti's father, who died in 1998, bought control of the winemaker in 1961, and the family now owns 26 percent of the company, which produces wine in Chile and Argentina. Shares of Santiago-based Concha y Toro trade on the Santiago Stock Exchange. American depository receipts, each of which is equal to 20 ordinary Chilean shares, trade on the New York Stock Exchange. To see the company's income statements for the past five years, type CONCHA CI <Equity> CH1 <Go>, as shown

at right. To graph the performance of Concha y Toro ADRs during the past year, type VCO US <Equity> GPO D <Go>.

The winemaker markets a brand of wines called Casillero del Diablo, which means Cellar of the Devil. According to the company's Web site, in

the late 19th century, the founder of the winemaker, Don Melchor Concha y Toro, discovered that his vineyard workers were helping themselves to his best vintages. To discourage this pilferage, he spread a rumor that the devil inhabited the cellar where these vintages were stored. In 2004, sales of Casillero del Diablo increased 46 percent to 1.5 million cases.

To see the Web site of the Opus Dei-affiliated IESE Business School, which is part of the University of Navarra and has campuses in Barcelona and Madrid, type 1753Z SM <Equity> DES <Go>. Press <Page Fwd> and type 2 <Go>. For headlines of news stories about religion, type NI RLG <Go>.

JON ASMUNDSSON

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CONCHA CI	Vina Concha y Toro SA	Source	Bloomberg			
Data Selected Financial Items Ending 2005 (Dec)						
Display	Ascending	Period	Yearly			
Selected Financial Items		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Book value/share	157.31	177.41	192.11	216.97	236.59	
EPS before XD items	18.39	22.68	25.84	31.55	26.47	
EPS aft XD items	18.39	22.68	25.84	31.55	26.47	
Cash Flow/Basic shr	29.03		21.74	19.09	17.72	
Avg # shares for FPS	719.17	719.17	719.17	719.17	719.17	
Current assets	78972.1	88127.5	100378.6	123428.9	146937.8	

For a map of South America, type MAPS <Go> 19 <Go>.