

Opus Dei in the Church

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With very great hope, the Church directs its attention and maternal care to Opus Dei, which—by divine inspiration—the Servant of God Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer founded in Madrid on October 2, 1928, so that it may always be an apt and effective instrument of the salvific mission which the Church carries out for the life of the world.¹

With these words, Pope John Paul II began his Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*, erecting Opus Dei as a personal prelatore. The document was dated 28 November 1982, the first Sunday of Advent.

As the Pope wrote, Opus Dei had been in existence since 1928 serving the mission of the Church. What is Opus Dei and what is its role in the Church? As a personal prelatore, it forms part of the hierarchical structure of the Church and, as such, it is different from what in recent times have come to be called new ecclesial movements. This will be explained in greater detail below.

To understand Opus Dei it will be helpful to look briefly at the life of its founder, St Josemaría Escrivá.

The founder

Josemaría was born on 9 January 1902 into a middle class Spanish family in Barbastro, Spain, the second of six children. His father ran a business selling clothing. When he was two, he contracted a childhood illness that brought him to the point of death. Indeed, the doctor told his parents one day that he would not survive the night, moving his parents to pray with great faith to the Blessed Virgin for his survival. His mother Dolores promised Our Lady that if he survived, she would take him on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the nearby shrine of Torreciudad, where an image of Mary had been venerated since the

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1. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*, 28 November 1982.

eleventh century. The following morning Josemaría had recovered fully and was jumping up and down in his crib when the doctor came to find out at what time he had died. His mother fulfilled her promise, and many years later, Saint Josemaría had the shrine developed as a place of pilgrimage, a conference centre and a centre of historical studies. It now receives many thousands of pilgrims each year from all over the world.²

In the following years, three of Josemaría's younger sisters died of childhood illnesses, and his father's business collapsed due to the mismanagement of his partner. All of this prepared the young Josemaría for the many trials and sufferings that were to come. With the collapse of the business the family moved to the town of Logroño, where his father took a job selling clothing. It was there, when he was in his mid-teens, that one day Josemaría saw in the snow the footprints of a discalced Carmelite walking ahead of him. This moved him to consider his own life and what he was doing for God. After seeking advice from a priest, he saw that God wanted him to be a priest and he entered the seminary of Saragossa.

After ordination to the diaconate in 1924, he received the news one day in November of that year that his father was gravely ill. When Josemaría arrived back in Logroño that same day he learned that his father had in fact died of a heart attack. This left him as the oldest son and responsible for supporting his mother, sister and younger brother. Josemaría was ordained a priest on 28 March 1925 and was shortly thereafter assigned to the tiny village of Perdiguera, near Saragossa, where he was in charge of the parish whose priest had become ill.

During all this time he was aware that God was still asking something more of him, but he did not know what it was. He prayed over and over again the aspirations *Domine, ut sit!* (Lord, that it may be!) and *Domine, ut videam!* (Lord, that I may see!) and asked many others to pray for his intentions.

The foundation of Opus Dei

In April 1927, Fr Josemaría moved to Madrid to continue his studies of civil law, which at the suggestion of his father, he had begun at the University of Saragossa while doing his seminary studies. It was in Madrid, while on retreat with other diocesan priests in the house of the Vincentians, that God revealed his will for him. It was 2 October 1928, the feast of the Guardian Angels, and Fr Josemaría was in his room going through some notes that he had taken earlier. Suddenly he 'saw'—this was the word he consistently used in later years to describe the experience—that God was asking him to open up a way of holiness for lay people, who would remain in the world carrying out their ordinary work, while following a vocation of complete dedication to God. Three years later he wrote of this moment: 'I received an illumination about the entire Work, while I was reading those papers. Deeply moved, I knelt down—I was alone in my

2. See www.torreciudad.org

room, at a time between one talk and the next—and gave thanks to our Lord, and I remember with a heart full of emotion the ringing of the bells of the Church of Our Lady of the Angels.'³

Thus Opus Dei came into being in a way quite different from that of most other institutions. There was no group of persons of like mind, one of them as leader, determined to bring into existence a new form of life or apostolate at the service of the Church. Rather there was a young diocesan priest, twenty-six years of age and only three years ordained, who had known for many years that God was asking something of him and who suddenly saw what that will of God was. For this reason, he always insisted in later years that he was not the founder, that it was God himself who had founded Opus Dei. And there was a very precise date of the foundation: 2 October 1928.

His initial reaction to this manifestation of the will of God was a feeling of uneasiness, but at the same time he heard in his soul the comforting words, 'Do not be afraid!' About this he later wrote:

I can assure you, my children, that those souls do not look or wish for the manifestations of that *extraordinary ordinary providence* of God, and that they have a profound awareness of not deserving it. I repeat to you once more that their sentiments in the face of such things are feelings of fear, of terror. But afterward our Lord's encouragement, *Ne timeas!* ['Do not be afraid!'], communicates to them an indestructible security, gives them clear ideas about how to fulfil his most lovable will, and inflames them to hasten toward goals beyond merely human reach.⁴

He was very clear from the beginning that holiness was for everyone, not just for priests or religious or a select few. In 1930 he wrote:

We have come to say, with the humility of those who know themselves to be sinners and of little worth—*Homo peccator sum* ['I am a sinful man'], we say with Saint Peter (*Lk* 5:8)—but also with the faith of those who let themselves be guided by the hand of God, that sanctity is not something for a privileged few; that our Lord calls every one of us, that he expects love from everyone, whatever might be their state in life, their profession, or their position: Because that ordinary, everyday life, with nothing showy about it, can be a means of sanctity. It is not necessary to abandon one's state in the world to seek God, if God does not give the soul a vocation to religious life, for every path of life can be the occasion of an encounter with Christ.⁵

3. Andres Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei* (Scepter: Princeton NJ, 2001), I, 220.

4. *Letter*, 6 May 1945, 4-5; in Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder*, 221.

5. *Letter*, 24 March 1930, 1; in Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder*, 225.

From that time on, Fr Josemaría set out to make a reality of the idea he had received from God. He sought men of all walks of life—students, tradesmen, artists—who he thought might understand the ideal of seeking holiness in ordinary life. Things moved very slowly at first and people came and went without remaining for a long time. He had to combine this new activity with his pastoral work as chaplain of the 'Foundation of the Sick', which involved attending spiritually to the sick in hospitals and in their homes all over Madrid. He was also giving classes in an academy in order to support his mother, brother and sister.

Then on 14 February 1930, Fr Josemaría received a new illumination from God: that in addition to men, Opus Dei was also to have women. This was a new light that completed what he had seen previously. It was another foundational day in the history of Opus Dei. He was not expecting this but as usual, he set out to fulfil this new manifestation of the will of God and to seek out women who might understand the ideal of a vocation of sanctity in the middle of the world.

All of this work was suddenly made much more difficult when the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936. During the next three years of intense persecution of the Church, over 6000 priests, in addition to numerous bishops, religious and lay people were put to death for their faith. Fr Josemaría had to go into hiding in Madrid and his life was in constant danger. Nonetheless, he continued to administer the sacraments whenever the opportunity arose, sometimes risking his life to reveal to others that he was a priest. Finally, in November 1937 he managed to escape the persecution by fleeing with other members of Opus Dei over the Pyrenees in a harrowing and exhausting ordeal. He took up residence in the free zone in Burgos until the end of the war and there continued his abundant work of formation. After the war ended in April 1939, he returned to Madrid and set about renewing the activities of Opus Dei. In spite of the many hardships and poverty of those years, the work of Opus Dei grew very quickly and many young men and women answered the call of God to dedicate themselves to a life of holiness in the world.

Juridical approvals

Until this time, Opus Dei had no formal juridical status, even though it had always been warmly blessed and encouraged by the bishop of Madrid, Leopoldo Eijo y Garay. Given the considerable opposition on the part of some in the Church, who did not understand that lay people could dedicate themselves to God in a true vocation without being religious, the bishop urged Fr Josemaría to seek some type of canonical approval. Thus on 19 March 1941 the bishop approved Opus Dei as a pious union. While not a satisfactory solution, it at least preserved the lay and secular character of Opus Dei, whose members remained ordinary Christians without changing their canonical status.

With the work continuing to expand, a new difficulty arose. Fr Josemaría found himself unable to keep up with the growing demands on his time as the

only priest in Opus Dei, and he sought a juridical solution that would allow some of the lay members to be ordained priests for the service of Opus Dei. He already had several men undertaking studies of philosophy and theology in addition to their professional work, but he was unable to find a way to have them ordained. Once again, God showed him the way. While celebrating Mass in a women's centre of Opus Dei on 14 February 1943 he received a new light. As he explained in a letter in 1944, the solution was 'to transform a small nucleus of our Work, made up of priests and some laymen approaching ordination, into a Society of Common Life without Vows, called the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.'⁶ The formula was approved by the Holy See and on 8 December 1943, Bishop Eijo y Garay erected the Priestly Society as of diocesan right. The first three priests were ordained the following year, and since then over 2000 priests have been ordained for Opus Dei.

With Opus Dei continuing to grow rapidly within Spain and to spread to other countries in Europe there was an urgent need for the Work, as it was commonly called, to be approved by the Vatican as of universal right, so that its statutes would not need to be approved by each bishop when the work began in a new diocese. To this end further submissions were made to the Holy See, and finally on 2 February 1947 Pope Pius XII established the new figure of Secular Institutes. Their members were to profess the evangelical counsels but they did not take public vows, nor were they obliged to live common life under the same roof. Nonetheless, they were included within the 'states of perfection'—something the founder never wanted for Opus Dei—and some of the laws on religious institutes were applied to them. On 24 February 1947 Opus Dei was approved as a Secular Institute of pontifical right.

In 1948 the Holy See approved the juridical incorporation into Opus Dei of married people, and soon afterwards the first married members were admitted. Today the majority of members are married. In 1950, when Opus Dei received its definitive approval from the Holy See, diocesan priests too were able to be members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. They continue to be incardinated in their diocese and are subject to their bishop for all the same effects as their fellow diocesan priests, but they receive spiritual assistance from Opus Dei.⁷

Another important step in the juridical history of Opus Dei came in 1965, when the Second Vatican Council proposed the establishment of personal prelatures, for 'the carrying out of special pastoral projects for the benefit of different social groups in any region or among any race in any part of the world.'⁸ When this happened, Father, now Monsignor, Josemaría saw the new figure as

6. A. de Fuenmayor, V. Gomez-Iglesias, J.L. Illanes, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei* (Scepter: Princeton 1994), 112.

7. For a fuller treatment of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross see J. Flader, 'The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in the Life of the Church,' *Australasian Catholic Record* 71(1994): 219-229.

8. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 10.

exactly what he had envisioned for Opus Dei since the beginning. In June 1969 he called a Special General Congress of members from all over the world to study the revision of the statutes with a view to the possible approval of Opus Dei by the Holy See as a personal prelatore. As the fruit of this work, in October 1974 the founder was able to sign the new statutes, known as the *Codex Iuris Particularis*, awaiting their approval by the Holy See. In 1978 Pope John Paul II entrusted the study of Opus Dei's approval as a personal prelatore to the Congregation for Bishops, and finally on 28 November 1982 the Pope, by the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*, established Opus Dei as a personal prelatore.

Mgr Escrivá did not live to see this moment, for which he had longed and prayed for many years. He died suddenly on 26 June 1975. By then the Work had spread to the six continents and had over 60,000 members. Testimonies on his holiness began to be received almost immediately, including from high-ranking Vatican prelates, leading to the opening of his cause of Beatification and Canonisation in 1981. Pope John Paul II beatified him in St Peter's Square on 17 May 1992 and canonised him on 6 October 2002.

Opus Dei as a personal prelatore

One of the early members of Opus Dei, Pedro Casciaro, once recalled how in 1936 he was with Fr Josemaría in the Madrid church of St Isabel when the founder pointed to the Latin epitaphs on two gravestones on the floor and said, 'There is the future juridical solution of the Work.'⁹ The tombs were those of a Cardinal and a Bishop, both of whom had been Vicar General of the Spanish Armed Forces, with universal personal jurisdiction over the members of the Armed Forces throughout the world. This was the type of juridical configuration St Josemaría had always envisioned for Opus Dei. What was there about Opus Dei that made this juridical solution so suitable?

Opus Dei has a number of distinctive features that make it very different from other institutions and hence very difficult, if not impossible, to fit into the previously existing canonical structures. It involves a divine vocation, a calling from God to dedicate oneself to the service of God for the rest of one's life. But rather than leaving their work in the world to take up some common apostolic tasks, the members of Opus Dei stay where they were when God called them, and endeavour to seek holiness in and through their ordinary work in the world. They are of all walks of life: housewives, truck drivers, teachers, lawyers, coal miners, doctors, farmers... As we have seen, they can be married or single, or secular priests. And both men and women have always formed part of the same institution, under the same head, albeit with separate organs of government and formation. By their vocation they remain lay people, carrying on their life in the world like all other lay people. That is, they do not become consecrated persons, or part of a 'state of perfection' in the old terminology. For this reason, St

9. de Fuenmayor et al, *The Canonical Path of Opus Dei*, 317.

Josemaría never wanted them to profess the evangelical counsels, but simply to practise all the Christian virtues. He always saw them as ordinary lay faithful who, like the early Christians, seek a life of true holiness in the middle of the world.

It is clear that none of the existing canonical structures could accommodate all these characteristics. The figure of Secular Institute, especially as legislated in the *Code of Canon Law* of 1983, actually excludes Opus Dei. Secular institutes, to begin with, are institutes of consecrated life¹⁰ and their members profess the evangelical counsels,¹¹ something St Josemaría always understood that God did not want for Opus Dei. But more importantly, married people cannot be members of secular institutes¹² and most of the faithful in Opus Dei are married. Moreover, much of the law of religious institutes is applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Secular Institutes and they are subject to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

The figure of personal prelatore, on the other hand, fits Opus Dei perfectly. It is a secular structure, as is a diocese, a military ordinariate or a territorial prelatore. Its faithful include both men and women, married and single, and priests, all under one head. It is called personal, of course, to distinguish it from a territorial structure like a diocese. Since 1991, the prelate of Opus Dei has been ordained a bishop, although this would not be strictly necessary. It is, nonetheless, fitting since the prelate has his own seminary, can call men to holy orders, and has numerous priests under his jurisdiction.¹³ Personal prelatures form part of the hierarchical structure of the Church and are subject to the Congregation for Bishops. The lay faithful of Opus Dei remain under the jurisdiction of their local diocesan bishop, like all other lay faithful in the diocese, and they are subject to the prelate only for matters of their spiritual formation and apostolic work.

The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross

As mentioned above, while Opus Dei consists primarily of lay faithful seeking holiness through their ordinary work in the world, priests can also have a vocation to Opus Dei.¹⁴ Some have joined Opus Dei as lay faithful and are later ordained for the service of the prelatore, becoming incardinated in it. Others, who were ordained for their dioceses, later see that they have an additional call to seek holiness in Opus Dei and they join the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, an association of priests intrinsically and inseparably united to Opus Dei. The latter remain subject to their diocesan bishop like any other diocesan priest, at the same time as they receive spiritual assistance and direction from priests of Opus Dei.

10. Cf. Code of Canon Law, Can. 710.

11. Cf. Can. 712.

12. Can. 721, §1, 3.

13. Cf. Can. 295, §1.

14. Cf. Flader, 'The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross,' 219-229.

The Priestly Society is an example of associations of priests, which were encouraged by the Second Vatican Council in the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. That document stated that ‘associations of priests are also to be highly esteemed and diligently promoted, when by means of rules recognised by the competent authority they foster priestly holiness in the exercise of the ministry through a suitable and properly approved rule of life and through brotherly help, and so aim at serving the whole order of priests.’¹⁵

For diocesan priests, membership in the Priestly Society involves a new vocation, called *superaddita* in the statutes of the Prelature.¹⁶ That is, over and above their initial vocation to the priesthood, they see themselves called by God to a lifetime commitment to seek holiness in the exercise of their priestly ministry according to the spirit of Opus Dei. To this end they attend regular talks and other means of formation along with other diocesan priests in the Society and they endeavour to follow a particular rule of life. The spirituality of the Priestly Society involves such aspects as the effort to sanctify all their priestly activities, a full commitment to carrying out the pastoral tasks assigned by the bishop, a great loyalty to the bishop in all matters, and an effort to foster fraternity and unity among their fellow diocesan priests.

Given the many stresses on diocesan priests today, including their growing workload due to the shortage of priests, associations like the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross offer valuable spiritual and human support to priests. Not only the priests who join the Society, but the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care and their fellow priests benefit immensely from their effort to seek holiness and their pastoral zeal. Moreover, their effective desire to promote vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life has borne abundant fruits all over the world. Many thousands of diocesan priests, including a good number of bishops, now belong to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross and they act as a leaven of holiness in their dioceses.

The role of Opus Dei in the Church

Opus Dei, as an integral part of the Church, lives out some of the most essential teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Three of them are particularly worthy of mention: the universal call to holiness, the role of the laity in the world and the vocation to evangelise.

1) *The call to holiness*

One of the principal teachings of the Second Vatican Council was the universal call to holiness. Indeed, Chapter Five of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, was entitled ‘The call to holiness’. After rehearsing the scriptural passages that refer to the call to holiness,¹⁷ the Council goes on to

15. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 8.

16. No. 58, 1.

17. For example, Eph 5:25-26, 1 Thes 4:3, Mt 5:48, Mk 12:30, Col 3:12.

say: ‘It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society.’¹⁸

Not only the Scriptures, but also numerous saints down the ages have written about the call to holiness.¹⁹ But while they have often been voices crying in the wilderness, with relatively few people taking up their call and putting it into action, in Opus Dei there is a large number of people of all walks of life, ages and conditions, who dedicate themselves by a divine vocation to seek holiness. Moreover, they do so with a distinctive lay spirituality, endeavouring to become saints not *in spite of* their work in the world, but *through* that very work. In a memorable homily in an open air Mass in October 1967 on the campus of the University of Navarre in Pamplona, Spain, St Josemaría summed up this spirituality:

You must understand now more clearly that God is calling you to serve him *in and from* the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us everyday, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.²⁰

For this reason Pope John Paul II said in an address to hundreds of thousands of people gathered in St Peter’s Square for the Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonisation of St Josemaría:

Saint Josemaría was chosen by the Lord to proclaim the universal call to holiness and to indicate that everyday life, its customary activities, are a path towards holiness. It could be said that he was the saint of the ordinary. He was really convinced that, for whoever lives with an outlook of faith, everything offers an opportunity for a meeting with God, everything becomes a stimulus for prayer. Seen in that way, daily life reveals an unsuspected greatness. Holiness is really put on everyone’s doorstep.²¹

In the pursuit of holiness all the faithful of Opus Dei, no matter what their age or condition of life, strive to fulfil a daily plan of spiritual activities which

18. *Lumen Gentium*, 40.

19. Among others, St John Chrysostom, St Teresa of Avila, St Francis de Sales, Jean Pierre de Caussade SJ, St Thérèse of Lisieux.

20. In J. Escrivá, *Conversations with Josemaría Escrivá* (Scepter: Princeton, 2002), 177.

21. *Address*, 7 October 2002.

includes Mass, mental prayer, reading of the Scriptures and some spiritual book, recitation of the Rosary and the Angelus, examination of conscience, etc. One of the results of this effort has been the effective holiness of many of the faithful. In fact, the causes of beatification and canonisation of a good number of faithful of Opus Dei all over the world are currently open. These include those of Isidoro Zorzano, the first person to join Opus Dei, who died in 1943; Montserrat Grases, a teenage girl who died in Barcelona in 1959; Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St Josemaría as head of Opus Dei, who died in Rome in 1994; Fr Joseph Muzquiz, one of the first three priests of Opus Dei, who began the apostolic work of Opus Dei in the United States and died there in 1983, and others, both married and single.

The message that all are called to holiness was not always widely understood, at least in the Spain of the 1930s, when Fr Josemaría was literally persecuted for preaching that message. Many, including priests, thought that to say that lay people in the middle of the world could be saints was to cheapen the very notion of sanctity. They considered that only priests and religious, who dedicated themselves completely to God in a life of celibacy, could be saints. It was thus with great relief that Fr Josemaría welcomed the solemn teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the universal call to holiness.

2) Laity in the world

The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* of the Second Vatican Council made clear that the distinctive vocation of the laity was to be lived *in the world*:

But by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit of the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties.²²

The faithful of Opus Dei have always understood clearly the secularity of their vocation. They see their calling, both as baptised Christians and as faithful of the prelature, as a call to bring Christ and his message into the heart of the world, helping to Christianise society. Since they come from all walks of life, each one seeks to do this in their own sphere of activity. A businessman or woman seeks to ensure that their business is always carried out ethically and with justice and charity towards their staff. A politician endeavours to promote

22. *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

legislation that reflects the natural law and Christian values. A worker or union organiser seeks justice for all employees. A university professor or school teacher endeavours to ensure that all they teach is consistent with the Gospel. A journalist or anyone working in the media seeks to convey the truth and to promote Christian values. A mother or father seeks to form their children in Christian doctrine and values so that they too can contribute to the Christianisation of society.

Naturally, in order that society becomes Christianised rather than the laity becoming secularised, the faithful require a deep formation, and this formation is one of the principal aims of the prelature. Opus Dei complements the work of the diocese and the parish by giving intense and on-going formation to its faithful and to all others who wish to attend. This formation covers such aspects as virtues, the spiritual life, Christian doctrine and the work of evangelisation. It is given through special courses and workshops, monthly days of recollection, yearly retreats and personal spiritual direction. All the faithful of Opus Dei, no matter what their level of education, receive classes in philosophy and theology in keeping with their particular needs and possibilities. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (1988), Pope John Paul II insisted on the importance of this formation if the laity are to be effective witnesses of Christ in the world.²³

3) The vocation to evangelise

"The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ."²⁴ So taught the Second Vatican Council in its decree on the apostolate of the laity. Since then, the Magisterium has not ceased to remind the faithful of this fundamental mission.²⁵ This is a mission predominantly of the lay faithful, who make up 99.9 per cent of the Church.

As already explained, the faithful of Opus Dei are very conscious of their responsibility to bring Christ into the world and into the lives of the people around them. St Josemaría preached and wrote constantly on this topic. In *The Way*, for example: "A secret, an open secret: these world crises are sanctity crises. God wants a handful of men "of his own" in every human activity. And then... "*pax Christi in regno Christi*—the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ".²⁶ To this end, the faithful of Opus Dei are given constant assistance to carry out an abundant work of evangelisation, which they endeavour to do primarily through personal friendship with those around them.

23. *Christifideles Laici*, 59-60.

24. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2.

25. Cf. for example, Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*; Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*.

26. No. 301.

The fruits are numerous: conversions, the return of many to the practice of the faith, a more frequent participation in the Mass and reception of the sacrament of Penance, vocations not only to Opus Dei but to the priesthood and the religious life... These fruits are quickly seen in parishes in larger numbers of people attending Sunday and weekday Masses, praying in church or making visits to the Blessed Sacrament, offering to teach catechism or to help out in sacramental programs, etc.

Pope John Paul II summed up the mission of Opus Dei in the Church in his address in St Peter's Square following the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Canonisation of St Josemaría:

Saint Josemaría was profoundly convinced that Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a 'redemptive love' (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 604). It is precisely for this reason that his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth. This is a message that has abundant and fruitful implications for the evangelising mission of the Church. It fosters the Christianisation of the world 'from within,' showing that there can be no conflict between the divine law and the demands of genuine human progress. This saintly priest taught that Christ must be the apex of all human activity (cf. Jn 12:32). His message impels the Christian to act in places where the future of society is being shaped. From the laity's active presence in all the professions and at the most advanced frontiers of development, there can only come a positive contribution to the strengthening of that harmony between faith and culture which is one of the great needs of our time.²⁷

27. Address, 7 October 2002.