

OPUS DEI FACT BOOK

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General Description of the Prelature

1.1 CHARACTERISTICS AND MISSION

Opus Dei is a personal Prelature of the Catholic Church (cf. section 1.2). “Opus Dei” means “Work of God.” The complete name is Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei. It is also more briefly called Prelature of Opus Dei or simply Opus Dei.

Opus Dei was founded in Madrid on October 2, 1928, by Blessed Josemaria Escriva (cf. 1.4). Nearly 80,000 people from all five continents belong to the Prelature. Its headquarters, together with the church of the Prelature, is in Rome.

The mission of Opus Dei is to *promote among Christians of all social classes a life in the middle of the world fully consistent with their faith and to contribute to the evangelization of every sphere of society*. In short, it is to spread the message that all the baptized are called to seek holiness and to make the Gospel known. This same message was at the core of the Second Vatican Council (cf. *Constitution on the Church*, 32, 33).

In order to achieve this aim, the Prelature provides for the spiritual, educational (formational), and pastoral care of its faithful, and offers this help to many other persons, “each one in his or her own state in life, profession, and situation in the world” (Statutes of Opus Dei, art. 2.1). With the help of this

pastoral attention they are encouraged to put into practice the teachings of the Gospel through the exercise of the Christian virtues and the sanctification of work (Statutes, art. 2).

The sanctification of work for the faithful of the Prelature means:

- Working with the greatest possible competence;
- Carrying out their work with the fullest respect for the law and in conformity with the demands of ethics;
- Seeking union with God in that work;
- Working with the desire of serving one's fellow citizens and of making a contribution to the progress of society (Statutes, art. 86.1).

A result of numerous men and women committing themselves to an authentic Christian life will be the sanctification of the world, the permeation of all activities and temporal realities with the spirit of the Gospel (cf. *The Canonical Path*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 1994, pgs. 34-41).

The faithful of the Prelature carry out the work of evangelization in every sector of society, since they work in all areas. Their apostolic work is not limited to specific fields, such as education, care for the sick, or help for the handicapped. The mission of the Prelature is to remind all Christians that they must bear constant witness to their faith and in whatever secular activity they dedicate themselves to they must cooperate in solving the problems of society in a Christian way.

1.2 PERSONAL PRELATURES

A) ORIGIN

Personal prelatures are a juridical configuration foreseen by the Second Vatican Council and are still recent in Church law.

The Council stipulated that to carry out special pastoral tasks in different regions or among any race in any part of the world special dioceses or personal prelatures can be established (cf. *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, Dec. 7, 1965, no. 10).

It was the intent of the Council to outline a new juridical figure, flexible in nature, aimed at contributing to the effective spread of the Christian message and life. In this way the Church could more aptly respond to the demands of its mission, which is inserted into and forms part of history.

Canon Law of the Catholic Church stipulates that each personal prelate must be regulated by general Church law and by its own statutes.

B) CONCEPT

Personal prelatures are institutions that belong to the *pastoral and hierarchical structure* of the Church. They are composed of priests taken from the secular clergy and by lay faithful who may be incorporated into the prelate by means of an agreement. A prelate is headed by a prelate, its own ordinary, who is named by the Roman Pontiff. He may or may not be a bishop. He governs with ecclesiastical power of governance or jurisdiction.

Most jurisdictions in the Church are territorial, as in the case of a diocese, because they are established according to a defined circumscription. Jurisdiction may not always be

linked to territorial location, however, but to some other criteria, such as particular type of work, religious rite, status as immigrants, or by an agreement made between two entities. This latter is the case for military ordinariates and personal prelatures. The jurisdiction of a prelature is not over territories, but over persons.

Personal prelatures are analogous to dioceses, but the two entities are not the same. Like a diocese, a prelature is composed of a prelate, a presbyterate (clergy) composed of secular priests, and lay faithful. But unlike a diocese, the jurisdiction of a prelature, as has been stated, is not bound to a particular territory. What's more, the faithful of a prelature continue to belong to the local church or diocese where they live just as they did before they made an agreement with the prelature. Personal prelatures are clearly differentiated from dioceses, religious institutes and the consecrated life in general, as well as from associations and movements of the faithful.

C) HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1966 Pope Paul VI opened the way for the creation of personal prelatures (Motu Proprio, *Ecclesiae sanctae*, I, 4) as foreseen by the Second Vatican Council. This document specified that the lay faithful could attach themselves to personal prelatures by means of a bilateral agreement or contract.

Paul VI stipulated in 1967 that personal prelatures were to be dependent on the Congregation for Bishops and that they would be erected by the Roman Pontiff after having heard the opinion of the appropriate Episcopal Conferences (Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae*, 49.1).

D) THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

Opus Dei already enjoyed a unity made up of laity and priests who cooperate in a specific pastoral and apostolic mission of an international nature. From its beginnings its mission has been to spread the ideal of holiness in the middle of the world—in the ordinary circumstances of life, especially through work.

Beginning with Pope Paul VI the Roman Pontiffs wanted a study to be undertaken of whether or not Opus Dei could be made a personal prelature. In 1969 a joint task force of the Holy See and Opus Dei began to investigate this possibility. This work was completed in 1981. The Vatican then sent a report to more than 2,000 bishops of the dioceses where Opus Dei was present so that they could add their observations.

After this step, Opus Dei was erected by John Paul II as a personal prelature of international scope in the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*, of November 28, 1982. With this document the Pope promulgated the Statutes which make up the particular pontifical law of Opus Dei. These Statutes were prepared by the founder years before, and the necessary changes were made to adapt them to the new legislation.

1.3 CHRONOLOGY

1928. October 2: While on a retreat in Madrid, Fr. Josemaria Escriva saw that God wanted him to found Opus Dei. The name "Opus Dei" came later and was not used until the 1930's. He explained to everyone, that "the Work" was not his own initiative, but "from God." He began his pastoral activity among the poor and the sick in hospitals, while also working with all types of people.

1930. February 14: In Madrid, while celebrating Mass, he understood the message of Opus Dei to be addressed to women as well. Until then he had thought it was only for men.

1933. The first center of Opus Dei is opened in Madrid, the DYA Academy, where classes in law and architecture are given.

1934. This center moves to another location and becomes a residence for college students. From there the founder and the first members offer Christian formation and spread the message of Opus Dei among young people. An important aspect of this work is teaching the Catholic faith to children and attending to the poor and sick in the outlying neighborhoods of Madrid. Fr. Josemaria always makes his activity known to the bishop of Madrid, who grants his approval and blessing. *Consideraciones espirituales*, the predecessor of *The Way*, is published.

1936. The Spanish Civil War breaks out: religious persecution is unleashed and Fr. Josemaria is obliged to hide in different places. This interruption of his apostolic work temporarily delays the expansion of Opus Dei to France and other parts of Spain.

1937. The founder and some members of Opus Dei complete a harrowing escape over the Pyrenees through Andorra and travel to an area where the Church is not persecuted.

1938. Renewal of apostolic work in Burgos, Spain.

1939. Fr. Josemaria returns to Madrid. Expansion of Opus Dei to other Spanish cities. The beginning of World War II hampers the expansion to other countries.

1941. March 19: The bishop of Madrid, Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, grants the first diocesan approval of Opus Dei as a Pius Union.

1943. February 14: Foundation of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, which will enable priests to be ordained for Opus Dei.

1944. June 25: The bishop of Madrid ordains the first members of Opus Dei: Alvaro del Portillo, Jose Maria Hernandez de Garnica, and Jose Luis Muzquiz.

1946. The founder of Opus Dei moves to Rome.

1947. February 24: The Holy See promulgates the decree of praise of Opus Dei, the first pontifical approval, erecting Opus Dei as a secular institute, a juridical form established in Church law. This juridical formula, even while inappropriate, was the one that presented the least number of drawbacks for Opus Dei at that time.

1948. June 29: The Roman College of the Holy Cross is established, where members of Opus Dei undergo a more intense period of religious and spiritual education and can study ecclesiastical sciences in the various Roman Pontifical Atheneums. Many priests of Opus Dei have been students of the Roman College of the Holy Cross.

1950. June 16: Pope Pius XII grants definitive approval to Opus Dei. This approval enables married people to join Opus Dei and diocesan priests to be admitted to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross (cf. 3.5).

1952. The University of Navarre (cf. 5.2) is begun in Pamplona, Spain.

1953. December 12: The Roman College of St. Mary, an international center in Rome, is established for the religious and spiritual education of women in Opus Dei from throughout the world. Over the years some 800 women have studied at the Roman College of St. Mary, receiving a doctrinal and theological education of a university level.

1957. The Holy See entrusts to Opus Dei the Prelature of Yauyos, located in the mountainous sections of Peru.

1965. *November 21:* Pope Paul VI inaugurates the ELIS Center, a vocational training center for young people located in an industrial section of Rome, together with a parish entrusted to it by the Holy See (cf. 5.2).

1969. A special General Congress of Opus Dei meets in Rome to study the change of legal status in the Church to personal prelature, a juridical configuration introduced by the Second Vatican Council, which seemed more appropriate to the pastoral characteristics of Opus Dei.

1970. The founder of Opus Dei travels to Mexico to undertake a novena of prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe. He meets with great crowds which become a means for Christian teaching (catechesis).

1972. The founder of Opus Dei travels throughout Spain and Portugal on a catechetical journey lasting two months.

1974. Catechetical journey of the founder of Opus Dei to South America.

1975. Catechetical journey to Venezuela and Guatemala.

June 26: Msgr. Escriva dies in Rome. Some 60,000 persons belong to Opus Dei at that time.

July 7: Inauguration of the shrine of Torreciudad in Huesca, Spain.

1975. September 15: Alvaro del Portillo is elected to succeed the founder by a congress of Opus Dei members called for that purpose and stipulated in the Statutes.

1982. November 28: Pope John Paul II erects Opus Dei as a personal Prelature and names Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo Prelate.

1983. Catechetical journey of the Prelate to North America.

1985. The Pontifical Atheneum of the Holy Cross is inaugurated in Rome, a university center for studies in ecclesiastical sciences (cf. 5.2).

1987. Catechetical journey to the Far East and the Pacific.

1989. Catechetical journeys to African countries.

1991. John Paul II ordains Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo as bishop.

1992. *May 17:* Beatification of Josemaria Escriva in St. Peter's Square in Rome.

1994. *March 23:* Death of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo in Rome just hours after his return from a trip to the Holy Land.

April 20: Msgr. Javier Echevarria is named Prelate of Opus Dei by John Paul II, when he confirms the election carried out by the General Elective Congress held in Rome.

November 21: the Prelate of Opus Dei is elevated to the episcopate.

1995. The new Prelate of Opus Dei is ordained bishop by John Paul II.

1996. A School of Institutional Social Communications (corporate communications) is added to the Pontifical Atheneum of the Holy Cross.

Opus Dei began its apostolic activities in different countries in the following years:

1945	PORTUGAL
1946	ITALY AND GREAT BRITAIN
1947	FRANCE AND IRELAND
1949	MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES
1950	CHILE AND ARGENTINA
1951	COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA
1952	GERMANY
1953	GUATEMALA AND PERU
1954	ECUADOR
1956	URUGUAY AND SWITZERLAND
1957	BRAZIL, AUSTRIA, AND CANADA
1958	JAPAN, KENYA, AND EL SALVADOR
1959	COSTA RICA
1960	HOLLAND
1962	PARAGUAY
1963	AUSTRALIA
1964	PHILIPPINES
1965	BELGIUM AND NIGERIA
1969	PUERTO RICO
1978	BOLIVIA

1980	ZAIRE, IVORY COAST, AND HONDURAS
1981	HONG KONG
1982	SINGAPORE
1983	TRINIDAD-TOBAGO
1984	SWEDEN
1985	TAIWAN
1987	FINLAND
1988	CAMEROON AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
1989	MACAO, NEW ZEALAND, AND POLAND
1990	HUNGARY AND CZECH REPUBLIC
1992	NICARAGUA
1993	INDIA AND ISRAEL
1994	LITHUANIA

1.4 BLESSED JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA, THE FOUNDER

Josemaria Escriva was born in Barbastro, Spain, on January 9, 1902. He had five siblings: Carmen (1899-1957) and Santiago (1919-1954), plus three other younger sisters who died when they were small children. His parents, Jose and Dolores, gave their children a profound Christian education.

In 1915 Josemaria's father's business failed, so the family relocated to Logrono, where he found other work. He had been in the fabric business.

It was in Logrono that Josemaria perceived his vocation for the first time. After seeing the bare footprints left in the snow by a monk, he felt that God wanted something of him, even

though he did not know exactly what it was. He thought that he would more easily discover it if he became a priest, so he began to prepare for the priesthood, first in Logrono and later in Saragossa.

His father died in 1924 and he was left as head of the family. Ordained in 1925, he began his ministry in a rural parish, and afterward in Saragossa.

In 1927, with the permission of his bishop, Fr. Josemaria moved to Madrid to obtain his doctorate in law. There, on October 2, 1928, during a retreat, he saw what it was that God was asking of him: he founded Opus Dei. From that time on he began to work on the development of Opus Dei while he continued his priestly ministry, particularly to the poor and sick. In addition, he studied at the University of Madrid and gave classes to support his family.

When the Civil War broke out in Madrid religious persecution forced him to take refuge in several places. He exercised his priestly ministry clandestinely until he finally was able to leave the Spanish capital. After a harrowing escape across the Pyrenees, he took up residence in Burgos.

At the end of the war in 1939 he returned to Madrid where he finally obtained his doctorate in law. In the years that followed he gave many retreats to laity, priests, and religious.

In 1946 Blessed Josemaria took up residence in Rome. There he obtained a doctorate in Theology from the Lateran University and was named consultor to two Vatican Congregations, as well as honorary member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology, and prelate of honor by Pope Pius XII. From Rome he frequently went to different countries in Europe, and to Mexico in 1970, to spur the growth of Opus Dei in those places. Similarly in 1974 and 1975 the founder made

two long trips to Central and South America, where he held gatherings with large groups of people.

Blessed Josemaria Escriva died in Rome on June 26, 1975. Thousands of people, including a third of the bishops from around the world, requested that the Holy See open his cause of beatification and canonization. His cause was opened in 1981 and was conducted fully in accord with Church law.

On May 17, 1992, Pope John Paul II beatified Msgr. Escriva before some 300,000 people in St. Peter's Square. In his homily, the Pope said that "with supernatural intuition Blessed Josemaria untiringly preached the universal call to holiness and apostolate."

PUBLICATIONS OF THE FOUNDER OF OPUS DEI:

- *The Way* is his best known work, an expansion of *Consideraciones espirituales*. It appeared in 1939 and some four million copies have been published in 38 languages.
- *Consideraciones espirituales* (1934)
- *Holy Rosary* (1934)
- *La Abadesa de las Huelgas* (1944)
- *Conversations with Msgr. Escriva* (1968)
- *Christ Is Passing By* (1973)
- *Friends of God* (1977)
- *The Way of the Cross* (1981)
- *In Love with the Church* (1986)
- *Furrow* (1986)
- *The Forge* (1987)

1.5 BISHOP ALVARO DEL PORTILLO, THE FIRST SUCCESSOR

Alvaro del Portillo, the first successor of Blessed Josemaria Escriva as head of Opus Dei, was born in Madrid on March 11, 1914.

He became a member of Opus Dei in 1935 and was ordained as one of the first three priests of the Prelature on June 25, 1944. Alvaro del Portillo served as Secretary General of Opus Dei from 1940 to 1947 and also from 1956 to 1975. He was also Procurator General between those periods. He had doctorates in civil engineering, history and Canon Law.

Don Alvaro, as he was called, was a consultant to several congregations and councils of the Holy See, such as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for the Clergy, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

He worked on the Second Vatican Council in various capacities, first as head of the Antepreparatory Commission on the Laity and then as secretary of the Commission on the Discipline of the Clergy and on other commissions. His books *Faithful and Laity in the Church* (1969) and *The Priesthood* (1970) are largely the fruit of that experience.

In 1975 Msgr. del Portillo was elected to succeed Blessed Josemaria at the head of Opus Dei. When Opus Dei was erected as a personal Prelature in 1982, he was named Prelate. Pope John Paul II conferred Episcopal ordination on Msgr. del Portillo on January 6, 1991.

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo died in Rome on March 23, 1994.

1.6 BISHOP JAVIER ECHEVARRIA, THE CURRENT PRELATE

The present Prelate of Opus Dei was born in Madrid on June 14, 1932.

He has been a member of Opus Dei since 1948 and holds doctorates in both Civil and Canon Law. Ordained a priest on August 7, 1955, Fr. Echevarria worked closely with Blessed Josemaria as his personal secretary from 1953 until his death in 1975. From 1966 onward he formed part of the general council, or advisory board, of Opus Dei.

In 1975 when Alvaro del Portillo succeeded Blessed Josemaria as head of Opus Dei, Bishop Echevarria was named Secretary General. In 1982, with the erection of Opus Dei as a personal Prelature, he became Vicar General.

Bishop Echevarria has been a consultant of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints since 1981 and for the Congregation for the Clergy since 1995.

After his election and appointment by John Paul II as Prelate of Opus Dei on April 20, 1994, the Pope ordained him bishop on January 6, 1995, in St. Peter's Basilica.

Explanation of The Prelature's Spirit

Opus Dei seeks to spread in the midst of the world the message of the universal call to holiness. This is how Blessed Josemaria expressed it in 1939: "You have the obligation to sanctify yourself. Yes even you! Who thinks this is the exclusive concern of priests and religious? To everyone, without exception, our Lord said: 'Be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect'" (*The Way*, no. 291).

Thirty years later, the Second Vatican Council reiterated that all Christians should strive to be saints and to bear witness to Christ. The spirit of Opus Dei constitutes a specific way to put this ideal into practice for ordinary faithful, both priests and laity. It can be summed up in the following features:

Divine Filiation. The Christian is a child of God by virtue of baptism. The spirit of Opus Dei emphasizes this basic truth of Christianity and places importance on the need to act in accord with that reality. It fosters confidence in divine providence, simplicity in dialogue with God, appreciation for natural, human realities, and serenity and optimism.

The Sanctifying Value of Ordinary Life. The ordinary Christian can seek holiness in and through the ordinary circumstances of life. In the words of Blessed Josemaria: "Ordinary life can be holy and full of God. Our Lord is calling us to sanctify the ordinary tasks of every day, for the

perfection of the Christian is to be found precisely there" (*Christ Is Passing By*, 148).

Sanctification of Work. Within the spirit of Opus Dei, work occupies a central place among the realities that must be sanctified. The profession, the job, the trade, whatever each one carries out, is a road to holiness. To sanctify their work, the faithful of the Prelature make the effort to carry it out "with the greatest perfection possible: with human perfection (professional competence) and with Christian perfection (for love of God's will and as a service to mankind)" (*Conversations with Msgr. Escriva*, 10).

Love for Freedom. The members of Opus Dei are citizens who enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same obligations as their peers. In any questions open to opinion, they strive to act with freedom and personal responsibility, not attempting to involve the Church in their decisions, nor to present them as the only ones consonant with the faith. This implies respect for the freedom and opinions of others.

Life of Prayer and Sacrifice. The spirit of Opus Dei encourages prayer and sacrifice in order to grow closer to God and to seek for holiness in ordinary life. The faithful of the Prelature strive to incorporate into their lives certain practices of Christian piety to enliven their love for God: private prayer, daily Mass, frequent confession, Gospel reading, and so on. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin occupies a special place. In order to imitate Jesus Christ, they make sacrifices, particularly in small, unseen ways in order to facilitate the faithful fulfillment of their duties and to make life more pleasant for others. Also, they fast, give alms, etc.

Charity and Apostolate. The members of Opus Dei try to bear witness to their Christian faith. In the words of the

founder: "As we work at our job, side by side with our colleagues, friends and relatives and share their interests, we can help them come closer to Christ" (*Friends of God*, 264). This task must be done, first of all, with personal example, and also with words. The eagerness to make Christ known is inseparable from the desire to contribute to resolving the material needs and social problems of one's surroundings.

Unity of Life. Friendship with God, ordinary day to day life, and effort in evangelization are all harmoniously fused in a *unity of life*, an expression coined by Blessed Josemaria that sums up a great part of his message. In 1967 he explained that Christians must not live "a kind of double life. On one hand, an interior life, a life of union with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life" (*Conversations with Msgr. Escriva*, 114). "There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God" (*Ibid*).

The Faithful of The Prelature

3.1 COMPOSED OF PRIESTS AND LAITY

Opus Dei is made up of a prelate (cf. 4.3), a presbyterate or clergy of its own, and laity, women and men.

The clergy of the Prelature come from among the numerary and associate members of Opus Dei who are freely willing to be priests if invited to do so by the prelate. They are ordained to carry out their ministry principally in the pastoral care of the faithful of the Prelature, the cooperators (cf. 3.6), and anyone else who wishes to receive the Christian formation that Opus Dei offers.

The lay faithful freely associate themselves with Opus Dei by means of an agreement or bilateral contract with the Prelature which stipulates their mutual commitments (cf. 3.2). They join with the aim of seeking holiness according to the spirit of Opus Dei and of contributing to the evangelizing mission proper to the Prelature.

A characteristic feature of Opus Dei is the atmosphere of a Christian family. This family atmosphere is present in the relationship of the faithful to each other and in the activities that the Prelature organizes. It becomes tangible in the warmth of a home found in its centers, in the simplicity and confidence of the members in dealing with one another,

and in a multitude of matters of service, understanding, and dedication in daily life.

3.2 THE LAY FAITHFUL

There are three different manifestations of the same vocation in Opus Dei. There are not different categories of membership, since there is but one unique vocation in the Prelature that makes everyone be and feel to the same degree members of one single portion of the People of God. It is simply a question of different *ways of living* this Christian vocation according to the circumstances of each person:

Supernumeraries: These make up the majority of the members (about 70% at present). They are most frequently married men or women. Sanctification of their family duties makes up a basic part of their mission.

Associates: They are men or women living apostolic celibacy, and thus are usually more available than the supernumeraries for certain apostolic activities. Each one lives with his or her family or wherever is most reasonable according to personal circumstances.

Numeraries: They also live apostolic celibacy. They are fully available to take care of the apostolic works and the formation of the other faithful of the Prelature. They usually reside in centers of the Prelature.

Among numerary women, some take as their occupation the domestic work of the centers of the Prelature, which they undertake in a professional manner and for which they are paid a professional salary.

In order to join Opus Dei a person must *freely* ask to do so; the authorities of the Prelature must accept that petition.

a. Incorporation into Opus Dei takes place by a series of steps, lasting over several years (cf. Statutes, art. 17-25):

- The interested person must request admission to Opus Dei in writing.
- After at least a six month period, the admission can be granted.
- After an additional period of at least one year, the person can be temporarily incorporated into the Prelature through a formal declaration of a contractual type. This contract must be renewed each year.
- Only after at least five years have passed can the incorporation become definitive.

In accord with Canon Law, no one may be juridically incorporated into the Prelature if they have not reached at least 18 years of age.

b. Incorporation into the Prelature presupposes the following commitments of both parties (cf. Statutes, art. 27):

- On the part of the Prelature: to provide the person formation in the Catholic faith and in the spirit of Opus Dei, as well as the necessary pastoral care by the priests of the Prelature.
- On the part of the person to be incorporated: to remain under the jurisdiction of the Prelate in whatever refers to

the aim of the Prelature, to respect the norms by which it is governed, and to fulfill the other obligations of its faithful.

All the faithful of the Prelature commit themselves to seek for holiness of life and to carry out an apostolate according to the spirit of Opus Dei. This implies, principally, fostering the spiritual life through prayer, sacrifice, and receiving the sacraments; using the opportunities that the Prelature provides for acquiring a deep knowledge of the doctrine of the Church and the spirit of Opus Dei; and taking part in the task of evangelization carried out by the Prelature, within the possibilities of each individual.

c. The *bond* with Opus Dei ceases with the termination of the contract, or anytime before, if the person so requests, in agreement with the authority of the Prelature. The legitimate departure from the Prelature brings with it the cessation of mutual rights and duties.

3.3 RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The Prelature provides its faithful with an ongoing religious and spiritual education, given through specific means that are compatible with the normal exercise of the professional, family and social duties proper to each one. The Prelature makes available to the faithful: meditation on the life of Christ; the study of Catholic morals and doctrine; the knowledge of the spirit of Opus Dei.

The faithful of the Prelature attend weekly classes, called "circles," on doctrinal and ascetical topics. They also attend days of recollection: one each month for a number of hours, and another yearly lasting several days.

These activities are also offered to the cooperators (cf. 3.6) and anyone else who wishes to receive them. They are given in the centers of the Prelature or in other appropriate places. For example, a circle may be given in the home of one of the persons who attend; a day of recollection in a church whose pastor permits it to be used for a few hours for that purpose.

3.4 PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC ACTIVITY

Joining the Prelature of Opus Dei brings about no change in personal status. The rights and duties one enjoyed as a member of civil society and the Church stay the same. "The laity incorporated into the Prelature do not change their own personal theological or canonical status, that of ordinary lay faithful, and it is as such that they conduct themselves in all their activities" (Congregation for Bishops, Declaration August 23, 1982, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 28, 1982, and in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 75, 1983, 464-468).

In virtue of the exclusively spiritual nature of its mission, the Prelature does not intervene in the temporal questions that confront its lay faithful. Each one acts with complete personal freedom and responsibility, and Opus Dei does not treat the decisions of its members as its own. According to the Statutes: In what refers to professional and political activity, social doctrines, etc. each of the faithful of the Prelature, within the limits of Catholic doctrine on faith and morals, has the same full freedom as other Catholic Christians. The authorities of the Prelature must totally avoid even so much as giving advice on these matters (cf. statutes art. 88.3).

3.5 PRIESTLY SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CROSS

The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross is an association of clergy intrinsically united to Opus Dei (cf. Statutes, art. 57-78). It is made up of clergy of the Prelature, who are automatically its members, and those diocesan priests who wish to belong to it. The Prelate of Opus Dei is the President of the society.

The diocesan clergy who belong to the Priestly Society seek spiritual help and strive for holiness in the exercise of their ministry, according to the spirit of Opus Dei. They do not form part of the presbyterate of the Prelature. Each one continues incardinated in his own diocese and depends solely on his own bishop.

The authorities of the Prelature do not have jurisdiction over them. The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross has a minimum of structure needed to achieve its goals. The authority of the Church and the Second Vatican Council have recommended this type of priestly association.

The spiritual help offered by the Priestly Society is directed toward promoting holiness in its members through the fulfillment of their priestly duties. It encourages priests to be united to their bishop and to practice fraternity among themselves. The spiritual director of Opus Dei, who is always a priest and has no office of government within the Prelature, is responsible for the coordination of the spiritual and formative activities of the members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

Some 2,000 diocesan priests belong to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross around the world.

3.6 THE COOPERATORS OF OPUS DEI

Cooperators of Opus Dei are men and women who lend their help to the apostolate of the Prelature with their prayer (if they are believers), their work, or their financial contributions. They are not members of Opus Dei. They receive the spiritual goods granted by the Church to those who collaborate with Opus Dei and the benefits of the prayers offered by the faithful of the Prelature who pray for them. They may also take part in the means of formation offered by the Prelature if they so wish.

Cooperators of Opus Dei can be Catholic, non-Catholic, non-Christian or non believers. All share a common desire to take part in and collaborate with the many undertakings of the Prelature.

3.7 FACTUAL INFORMATION

The Prelature is made up of some 80,000 persons, of whom almost 1,600 are priests. Of the total number of lay faithful, approximately half are women. The distribution is approximately as follows:

Africa	1,000
Asia and the Pacific	4,000
America (north and South)	27,000
Europe	46,000

Organization of the Prelature of Opus Dei

4.1 GOVERNING REGULATIONS FOR OPUS DEI

Within the general law of the Church, Opus Dei is governed by the legislation for personal prelatures. The Code of Canon Law (1983) devotes one title to them (IV in Book II, part I: canons 294-297).

The specific regulations for Opus Dei are the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* (cf. 1.2) and its own Statutes, also called the Code of Particular Law of Opus Dei.

4.2 JURISDICTION OF THE AUTHORITIES OF THE PRELATURE

The priests of the Prelature depend fully on the Prelate who assigns their pastoral tasks which they seek to carry out in close union with the pastoral guidelines of their diocese (cf. 4.4). The Prelature is responsible for the economic sustenance of its priests.

The lay faithful depend on the Prelate in all that refers to the specific mission of the Prelature (cf. Statutes, art. 125.2). They are of course subject to the civil authorities as are all other citizens and to ecclesiastical authorities as are all other Catholic lay faithful (cf. 4.4).

4.3 ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE PRELATURE

At the head of the Prelature is the Prelate; he is the Prelature's own ordinary. He and the Vicars in his place exercise authority only in what pertains to the spiritual and apostolic aims of the Prelature. One of the characteristics of Opus Dei is its collegial style of government. The Prelate and his Vicars carry out their work with the cooperation of advisory councils, made up largely of laity.

General congresses of the Prelature are held every eight years with the participation of members from the countries where Opus Dei is working (cf. Statutes, art. 133). In these congresses the work of the Prelature is studied and the direction of its future pastoral activity is presented to the Prelate. During the congress the Prelate names new councils.

When it is necessary to name a new Prelate, a general elective congress is convened. The Prelate is chosen from among the priests of the Prelature who fulfill the conditions of age, duration in Opus Dei, priestly experience, etc. (cf. Statutes, art. 131). His election must be confirmed by the Pope (cf. Statutes, art. 130). The term of office is for life. The current Prelate is Bishop Javier Echevarria.

The Prelate is assisted in his work of governance by a council of women (called the central advisory and made up of women) and another of men (the general council consisting of men). Both are located in Rome.

The Prelature is divided into territorial circumscriptions called regions. At the head of each region (whose geography may or may not be the same as a particular country) is a Regional Vicar and two councils: a regional advisory for women and a regional commission for men.

Some of the regions are further subdivided into delegations, with a more limited territory. They have the same governmental organization: a Vicar of the delegation and two corresponding councils.

Finally, at the local level, are centers of Opus Dei. These are dedicated to organizing the means of formation and pastoral care of the faithful of the Prelature in their area. Centers are either for women or for men. Each one is governed by a local council, headed by a layperson, who is the director, and at least two more faithful of the Prelature. For the pastoral care of the faithful the Prelate assigns to each center a priest from his presbyterate.

No office of government, apart from that of the prelate, is for life (Statutes, art. 125-129).

4.4 RELATIONS WITH THE DIOCESES

The Prelature of Opus Dei is a jurisdictional structure belonging to the pastoral and hierarchical organization of the Church (cf. 1.2). Like dioceses, territorial prelatures, vicariates, and military ordinariates, etc. it has its own autonomy and jurisdiction to carry out its mission in the service of the whole Church. For that reason it is dependent immediately and directly on the Roman Pontiff (cf. Statutes, art. 171), through the Congregation for Bishops (cf. Apostolic Constitution, *Ut sit*, art. V).

The Prelature of Opus Dei, like the military ordinariates, is a structure of a *personal* type and is established to carry out a specific pastoral task. The authority of the Prelate extends only to what refers to *the specific mission of the Prelature*, and is in complete harmony with the authority of the diocesan

bishop in what pertains to the ordinary pastoral care of the faithful. The following are some features:

a. The lay faithful of Opus Dei are subject to the authority of the Prelate only in what refers to the aims of the Prelature. Specifically, they are subject to the ascetical, formational, and apostolic commitments stipulated in the contractual incorporation they make with the Prelature (cf. Statutes, arts. 27.3 and 125.2). These commitments fall outside of the authority of the diocesan bishop. Nevertheless, the lay faithful of Opus Dei continue as faithful of the diocese in which they reside and remain under the authority of the diocesan bishop in exactly the same way as the other baptized persons in the diocese who are their equals. (cf. Statutes, art. 172.2).

b. According to the terms of general and particular law, priests incardinated into the Prelature belong to the secular clergy and are fully under the authority of the Prelate (cf. Statutes, art. 125.2). They are to foster a relationship of fraternity with the members of the diocesan presbyterate (cf. Statutes, arts. 41 and 56), observe with all care the general discipline of the clergy, and enjoy both an active and passive voice in the presbyteral council of the diocese. Diocesan bishops, with the previous permission of the Prelate or of his Vicar, can entrust priests of the Prelature with positions or ecclesiastical offices (pastors, judges, etc.). They will render account of their work only to the diocesan bishop and will conduct their work according to his directives.

Opus Dei's Statutes (title IV, chapter V) establish criteria for a harmonious relationship between the Prelature and the dioceses where it operates. The Prelature always maintains proper relations with the diocesan authorities (cf. Statutes, art. 174.1).

Diocesan bishops are regularly informed of the activities of the Prelature. Some features of this relationship are the following:

a. Opus Dei never begins its apostolic work nor establishes a center of the Prelature without the prior permission of the local bishop. Officials of the Prelature also give the local bishop a copy of the Statutes.

b. In order to erect churches of the Prelature, or when a parish or church already in existence is entrusted to it, a contract will be made between the diocesan bishop and the Prelate or corresponding regional Vicar. The general regulations of the diocese regarding churches will be observed in such cases (cf. Statutes, art. 180).

c. The regional authorities of the Prelature maintain regular dialogue with the bishops of dioceses where the Prelature carries out its pastoral and apostolic work. This is also done with the bishops who hold positions of government in the Episcopal Conferences and with their respective organizations (cf. Statutes, art. 174.2).

The activity of Opus Dei may be summed up by saying it is devoted to the religious and spiritual education of the faithful of the Prelature so that they can carry out a wide ranging apostolic activity, each one in his or her own place in the Church and in the world. They will support the work of evangelization of the shepherds of the Church and promote the ideal of the universal call to holiness in their surroundings.

The apostolic work of the members of Opus Dei bears fruit, with the grace of God, in parishes and local churches throughout the world. Among the spiritual fruits are conversions of souls, more frequent reception of the sacraments,

and the spread of the Gospel message to many distant from the faith. The members collaborate in parish catechism courses and undertake initiatives of solidarity for those in need. In these apostolic efforts they seek to cooperate with appropriate diocesan entities. This apostolate is carried out within the framework of the specific charism of Opus Dei, namely sanctification of work and the realities of ordinary life.

The authorities of Opus Dei promote the unity of all the faithful of the Prelature with the diocesan bishops, especially in what relates to their directives and guidelines and those of the Episcopal Conference. Each member is encouraged to put them into practice in accord with his or her personal, family, and professional situation (cf. Statutes, arts. 174.2 and 176).

4.5 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All the faithful of the Prelature have the responsibility to provide for their own personal and family needs by means of their ordinary work (cf. Statutes, 94.2).

Besides providing for their own living expenses, the faithful of Opus Dei also try to contribute to the pastoral work of the Prelature. These contributions are for the support and formation of the priests of the Prelature, expenses in the task of government (central and regional), and to assist in its apostolic expansion. In the case of serious financial need, the Prelature can provide economic assistance to close relatives of the numeraries and associates.

The faithful of the Prelature, with the assistance of the cooperators of Opus Dei and many others, develop and financially sustain initiatives of a social nature, always on a not-for-profit basis, for the good of many souls (activities of a

charitable, educational nature, etc). These entities themselves, not Opus Dei, are responsible for their own economic maintenance. The spiritual and doctrinal orientation of many of these entities, however, can be entrusted to the Prelature (cf. 5.2, corporate works).

Apostolic Initiatives

5.1 BASIC FEATURES

"The main activity of Opus Dei is offering its members, and other people, the spiritual means they need to live as good Christians in the midst of the world," the founder of Opus Dei explained (*Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá*, 27). With this formation as a foundation, each one carries out his or her apostolic activity, bearing witness to Jesus Christ in their own surroundings. This personal apostolate is always the most important one in Opus Dei.

The Prelature can also establish agreements with those who are in charge of specific activities in order to provide them with a *Christian orientation*. These activities will always be in the public interest (educational, charitable, etc.) with a clear apostolic character: grade schools, high schools, universities, schools for professional formation, medical centers, etc. The Prelature does not undertake profit-making enterprises, commercial undertakings, political activities, and so forth.

Opus Dei solely provides activities consistent with its own nature as a Prelature of the Catholic Church. It is concerned only with a Christian leavening of these undertakings, offering doctrinal orientation and pastoral care. All of these activities fully respect the freedom of consciences and are open to people of all creeds, races, and social conditions.

The Prelature of Opus Dei can enter into various types of agreements with apostolic activities:

- a. In so-called “corporate works” of apostolate, Opus Dei morally guarantees the Christian orientation of the activities they provide.
- b. In other cases, Opus Dei provides spiritual help to one degree or another, without officially assuming any moral guarantee for the formational work carried on there. This spiritual assistance can take a variety of forms, such as priestly ministry, responsibility for religion classes, etc.

It need not be said that such agreements with the Prelature do not modify the civil nature of these entities in any way. The responsibility for their function and direction always rests with its own directors, who are civil persons or entities, and not with the Prelature of Opus Dei.

5.2 CORPORATE WORKS OF APOSTOLATE

Corporate works of apostolate are those that are promoted by members of Opus Dei along with others and bear the moral guarantee of the Prelature. Opus Dei is only responsible for the Christian orientation.

These apostolic initiatives are established in each country in accord with the legal and financial requirements for civil institutions of their type. It is worth repeating that the persons and entities who undertake these activities are responsible for them, not Opus Dei. The sponsoring entities (the owners of the property and assets) are responsible for all organizational, legal and financial aspects (cf. Statutes, art. 122).

Each undertaking is financed in the same way as any other entity of the same type: through fees paid by participants, grants, financial contributions, etc. The corporate works of apostolate frequently operate at a deficit, given the social nature of their activity and because they are not run with a profit-making aim. They ordinarily seek government subsidies and grants from private foundations and businesses. Another source of financing is the donations made by the faithful of Opus Dei, cooperators, and many other people.

Among the corporate works are high schools, universities, vocational training centers, medical clinics in underdeveloped areas, schools for farmers, institutes for professional education, student residences, etc. Some examples are:

- The University of Navarre, founded in Pamplona, Spain in 1952, has 20 departments. The Pamplona campus includes the university hospital. A business school, the Institute for Higher Business Studies (IESE), is located in Barcelona. Similar initiatives exist elsewhere: the University of Piura (Peru), the University of La Sabana (Colombia), and the University of Asia and the Pacific (Philippines).

- Kianda College in Nairobi, Kenya, began in 1961 and was the only interracial educational center for women in the country. In circumstances that traditionally offered women fewer opportunities for pursuing a profession, Kianda offers training for the practice of administrative professions to students coming principally from rural areas. In 1993 it became the secretarial school of Strathmore College, an educational institution that is made up of Kianda and other branches, as well as an accounting school and an institute of information technologies.

- ELIS Center, a vocational training school, located in an industrial section of Rome, prepares specialists in a number of trades. Its programs are financed by the local government as well as by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since the center offers programs for students from underdeveloped countries such as Albania, Somalia, etc.

- Midtown Center in Chicago, situated in a multiracial neighborhood, offers programs of academic, human, athletic, and spiritual formation. The programs compensate for the deficiencies in the local social environment. Of Midtown's students, 95% finish high school and 60% go on to college, more than double the averages of their peers.

- Pontifical Atheneum of the Holy Cross, an institution for higher ecclesiastical studies located in Rome, was erected by the Holy See. It is a response to a desire of Blessed Josemaria who wanted the Prelature to provide a university in Rome dedicated to research and formation in ecclesiastical sciences. Its faculties of Theology, Canon Law, Philosophy, and Institutional (Corporate) Communications accommodate over 600 students from around the world.

- Toshi, west of Mexico City, is an educational institute for women in a rural area populated by ethnic groups. Among other activities, it offers administrative education, which helps women find positions in business and public life in surrounding cities.

The Prelature of Opus Dei in the United States

The Prelature of Opus Dei began its apostolic activities in the United States in Chicago in 1949. Fr. Joseph Musquiz, one of the initial priests to be ordained for Opus Dei in 1944, was among the first to arrive. The Prelature's first center was established near the University of Chicago. The following year apostolic activities began for women in the United States in the same city.

From Chicago the apostolic expansion spread across the country. First to Madison, Milwaukee, St. Louis, South Bend, Boston, and Washington, then New York and San Francisco. Today there are 64 centers in 17 cities. There are 3,000 faithful of the Prelature. Opus Dei has four conference centers for retreats and seminars. They are located near Boston, Chicago, Houston, and San Francisco.

The faithful of the Prelature have been involved in educational activities, many that assist the underprivileged. Supplementary educational programs at Midtown and Metro Centers in Chicago have helped thousands of African American and Hispanic youth to graduate from high school, attend college and aspire to professional careers. Similar programs have been operating in the South Bronx of New York, the Roxbury/Dorchester section of Boston and in the Washington DC area. Members of Opus Dei, in cooperation

with others, operate five high schools in the United States: The Heights and Oakcrest in Washington DC, Northridge Prep and The Willows in Chicago, and the Montrose School in Boston. In 1991 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, appointed two priests of Opus Dei to administer a parish, St. Mary of the Angels.

Information on Opus Dei can be found in the National Catholic Directory and pertinent diocesan directories. A contact number is listed in telephone directories in the cities where Opus Dei has centers. Opus Dei's Office of Public Information is located at 524 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10804. Currently serving as Vicar in the United States is Msgr. James A. Kelly.

The Prelature's official Web Site can be found at <http://www.opusdei.org>

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