



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Personal Prelature

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What is a personal prelature?

The idea of the juridical structure known as the personal prelature was introduced by the Second Vatican Council. The Council decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December 1965) stated that, among other institutions, “special dioceses or personal prelatures” could be established “to carry out special pastoral tasks in different regions or among any race in any part of the world”.

What are the characteristics of personal prelatures?

The Council laid down that this new juridical figure was to be flexible in nature, in order to contribute to the effective spreading of the Christian message and Christian life. In this way the Church could more aptly respond to the demands of its mission in the world.

Personal prelatures, as envisaged by the [Second Vatican Council](#), are made up of a pastor, a presbyterate consisting of secular priests, and men and women lay faithful. The prelate, who may be a bishop, is appointed by the Pope, and governs the prelature with power of governance or jurisdiction.

The Church has the power of self-organisation in order to pursue the aims set for her by Christ. Exercising this power, she has established personal prelatures within her hierarchical structure, with the special feature that the faithful of the prelature continue to belong to their local church and to the diocese where they live.

The establishing of Opus Dei as a personal prelature

Opus Dei was established by John Paul II as a personal prelature of international scope. The document effecting this was the apostolic constitution *Ut Sit*, of 28 November 1982. For the reasons given above, personal prelatures are clearly

different from religious institutes and the consecrated life in general, as well as from associations and movements of the faithful. The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church stipulates that each personal prelature must be regulated by general Church law and by its own statutes.