



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Saint Josemaria](#) - [Opus Dei](#) - The Faithful of the Prelature

The Faithful of the Prelature

2009.5.3

Who are the members of Opus Dei?

People ask to join Opus Dei because they receive a calling to it from God. The vocation to Opus Dei determines or focuses the Christian vocation received with Baptism; it points to a specific way of seeking holiness in the middle of the world and sharing in the mission of the Church: doing so according to the spirit with which God inspired St Josemaria.

Most of the Opus Dei faithful – 70 per cent – are Supernumeraries, usually married. The remainder – Numeraries and Associates – are men and women who commit themselves to celibacy for the sake of the apostolate.

The Numeraries are those whose circumstances enable them to make themselves fully available to look after the apostolates of Opus Dei and to provide other members with the formation they require.

Each in their own circumstances

There are not different categories of members in Opus Dei. There is one single vocation, which is the same for all the faithful of the prelature. Through it they are, and consider themselves to be, all equally members of a single portion of the People of God. There are, however, different ways of living that same Christian vocation, according to the different circumstances of each one: married or single, healthy or sick, etc.

“Yours is truly a great ideal,” said Pope John Paul II in 1979, “which from the beginnings anticipated the theology of the laity that was to characterize the Church of the Council and the postconciliar period. This is the message and the spirituality of Opus Dei: to live in union with God in the midst of the world, in any situation, with the help of divine grace, trying to be better people, and making

Christ known through the testimony of one's own life.”

Joining the Opus Dei Prelature does not change a person's position in society or the Church. They continue to have the same rights and duties as before. “The laity incorporated into the prelature do not change their theological or canonical status. Their identity continues to be that of ordinary lay faithful, and they act as such in all that they do.”

The priests of Opus Dei

The priests of the Opus Dei prelature are ordained from among the lay faithful of Opus Dei: Numeraries and Associates who, freely available to be priests, having belonged to the prelature for years and having completed the necessary studies for the priesthood, are invited by the prelate of Opus Dei to receive Holy Orders. Their priestly ministry is mainly carried out in the service of the faithful of the prelature and the apostolic activities they organize.

What commitments do Opus Dei members make?

For those who join Opus Dei, the prelature commits itself to provide each person with ongoing formation in the Catholic faith and in the spirit of Opus Dei, as well as the necessary pastoral care from the priests of the prelature. The faithful of the prelature commit themselves to seeking holiness and doing apostolate according to the spirit of Opus Dei. This involves, principally, growing in spiritual life through prayer, sacrifice, and receiving the sacraments; prayer, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, and constant recourse to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Guardian Angels. They seek identification with Christ through a spirit of penance, offering sacrifices and mortifications, especially the kind that facilitate the faithful fulfilment of their duties and that make life pleasanter for the people around them, plus self-denial, fasting and almsgiving.

Through the formational activities offered by the prelature, its faithful receive ongoing formation in the teaching of the Church and the spirit of Opus Dei. This equips them to take part in the task of evangelization which the Church expects of the prelature.

What does Opus Dei offer?

The prelature provides its faithful with ongoing religious and spiritual formation

through specific activities tailored to fit in with their work and their family and social commitments. The various means of formation offered by the prelature enable its members to acquire deep, solid piety, as children of God, which leads them to seek to become like Christ; a thorough knowledge of Catholic faith and morals; and an increasing familiarity with the spirit of Opus Dei.

Because its mission is exclusively spiritual, the prelature does not intervene in the temporal matters engaged in by its faithful. Each individual acts with complete personal freedom and responsibility, and Opus Dei does not treat the decisions of its members as its own. The Statutes lay down that in matters concerning their professional, social and political activity, 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 citizens. The authorities of the prelature must totally avoid even so much as giving advice on these matters.

Further information

The Opus Dei prelature is made up of about 87,000 people, including about 1,900 priests. Approximately half the total are women and half are men.