

PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

**EXTRAORDINARY
GENERAL
CONGRESS**

12-16 April 2023

Press Dossier

OPUS DEI



EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

12-16 April 2023

PRESS DOSSIER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Opus Dei: charism and data

- 1.1 Message
- 1.2 Historical overview
- 1.3 Current data
- 1.4 Some recent news about the Prelature of Opus Dei
- 1.5 Selection of social and educational initiatives

2. The Extraordinary General Congress

- 2.1 Brief description
- 2.2 *Motu Proprio*
- 2.3 Chronology
- 2.4 Letter from the Prelate, 30-III-2023

3. Q&A

- 3.1 About the Extraordinary General Congress
- 3.2 About the *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*'
- 3.3 Pope Francis, Opus Dei, and '*Ad charisma tuendum*'

4. Other resources

- 4.1 Information on www.opusdei.org
- 4.2 Photos
- 4.3 Videos
- 4.4 Contacts
- 4.5 Infographic

1. Opus Dei: charism and data

1.1 Message

Opus Dei is a pastoral institution of the Catholic Church, founded in Madrid on 2 October 1928 by St. Josemaría Escrivá. In 1983, St. John Paul II established it as a personal prelature, a pastoral structure foreseen by the Second Vatican Council.

Its aim is to help the Church's mission of evangelization, fostering among Christians (both lay people and priests) the aim of a life lived in conformity with their faith, and in their ordinary circumstances, especially through the sanctification of their daily work. To sanctify work means to carry it out according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, striving to fulfil one's duties in the best way possible, so as to give glory to God and to serve others. In this way, work becomes a place to meet God, and an opportunity for personal growth and contribution to society.

Opus Dei's main activity is providing Christian formation, offering spiritual support to its members and to anyone else who wishes it, so that each person in their respective place in society and in the Church, can promote the ideal of the universal call to holiness. The faithful of the Prelature, at a personal level and when working with other citizens, strive to help resolve the problems of all sectors of the society they live in, doing so with a Christian spirit.

The message of Opus Dei reminds people that, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, "all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 40), in "each and in all of the secular professions and occupations [and] the ordinary circumstances of family and social life [...] They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 31).

A more detailed description is available at [this link](#).

1.2 Historical overview

1928. *2 October.* While on a spiritual retreat in Madrid, on 2 October, Josemaría Escrivá founds Opus Dei.

1930. *14 February.* The apostolic work with women begins.

1933. The first apostolic initiative of Opus Dei opens in Madrid: DYA Academy, mainly for university students.

1934. DYA becomes a residence for university students. From there, the founder and the first members of Opus Dei offer Christian formation and spread the message of Opus Dei among young people. Teaching catechism and looking after the poor and sick in the outlying neighbourhoods of Madrid form an important part of this work.

1936. Due to the Spanish Civil War and religious persecution, St. Josemaría and other faithful of Opus Dei are obliged to hide and, eventually, to escape from Madrid. Plans to extend Opus Dei's apostolic work are temporarily suspended.

1939. Josemaría Escrivá returns to Madrid and initiates Opus Dei's expansion to other cities in Spain. The Second World War prevents expansion to other countries.

1941. The bishop of Madrid, Msgr. Eijo y Garay, grants the first diocesan approval of Opus Dei.

1943. *14 February.* At Mass, the Lord allows St. Josemaría to see the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, the juridical solution that would enable priests to be ordained and formed in the spirit of Opus Dei.

1944. The bishop of Madrid ordains the first three members of Opus Dei to become priests: Álvaro del Portillo, José María Hernández Garnica, and José Luis Múzquiz.

1946. St. Josemaría moves to Rome. In the years that follow, he travels through Europe, meeting many diocesan bishops, to prepare the beginnings of Opus Dei in different countries.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

1947. The Holy See grants the first pontifical approval of Opus Dei. The scope of this approval is universal.

1950. Pius XII grants Opus Dei definitive approval. From this moment on, married people can join Opus Dei and diocesan priests can be admitted to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

1952. The General Study of Navarre begins in Pamplona (Spain). It will become the University of Navarre in 1960.

1965. Paul VI inaugurates the ELIS Centre, a vocational training centre for young people in the outskirts of Rome, together with a parish entrusted to priests of Opus Dei in the same neighbourhood.

1969. A special general congress of Opus Dei meets in Rome to study Opus Dei's change to a personal prelature, a juridical structure introduced by the Second Vatican Council.

1970-75. The founder of Opus Dei makes long trips through Latin America, Spain and Portugal, where he holds gatherings with many groups of people.

1975. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer dies in Rome on 26 June. At this time, Opus Dei works in 31 countries. On 15 September, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo is elected to succeed him.

1982-83. St. John Paul II establishes Opus Dei as a personal prelature, appointing Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo its prelate. The formal execution of the pontifical document establishing Opus Dei as a personal prelature takes place on 19 March 1983.

1991. St. John Paul II ordains Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo, the prelate of Opus Dei, a bishop.

1992. Josemaría Escrivá is beatified by St. John Paul II.

1994-95. Blessed Álvaro del Portillo dies in Rome on 23 March. On 20 April, St. John Paul II —following the elective congress— names Msgr. Javier Echevarría Prelate of Opus Dei. On 6 January 1995, he ordains him a bishop.

2002. *6 October.* Josemaría Escrivá is canonised.

2014. *27 September.* Álvaro del Portillo is beatified in Madrid.

2016. *12 December.* Msgr. Javier Echevarría, St. Josemaría's second successor, dies in Rome.

2017. *23 January.* After the Prelature's third elective congress, Pope Francis names Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz Prelate of Opus Dei.

2019. *18 May.* The first lay person of Opus Dei to be declared Blessed, Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, is beatified.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

1.3 Current data

Currently, around 93,600 people, of whom 2,093 are priests, form part of the prelature. Approximately 60% of the total are women and 40% are men. The distribution by continent is as follows: 4% Africa, 4.5% Asia, 54.5% Europe, North and South America 36%, and Oceania 1%.

In addition to the priests of the Prelature, 1,957 priests and some deacons, incardinated in different dioceses around the world, belong to the [Priestly Society of the Holy Cross](#).

Dates when Opus Dei began its work in different countries



1.4 Some recent news about the Prelature of Opus Dei

- *Some plans of action proposed after the last ordinary General Congress*

In the congress at which Msgr. Ocariz was elected, some guidelines for pastoral work over the next several years were decided. These are a few of them, summarised in the Prelate's letter from 14-II-2017:

- Offer formation that integrates understanding of a society in a state of constant, rapid change and profound knowledge of the Gospel, bearing in mind that the faithful of Opus Dei call out their work at all the crossroads of society. "This challenge demands deep human, professional and doctrinal formation of everyone, according to their possibilities, and a strong presence in the forums to which they have access, with an open mentality that enables them to dialogue with everyone" (nos. 16-20).
- In his letter, the Prelate also underlined the transcendent importance of the family (no. 21) and of apostolate with young people (nos. 24-28): "This idea of accompanying the family and young people provides a guiding principle for the conclusions of the Congress, and from it we can draw out many practical consequences for our daily apostolate" (no. 31).
- Thinking of the great number of people who suffer or are in need, for different reasons, Msgr. Ocariz wrote that, "along with these priorities, I would like to emphasize the urgency that we all feel of enlarging our hearts – we ask God to give us hearts to his measure – so that there enter into it all the needs, pains and sufferings of the men and women of our time, especially the weakest" (no. 31).

- *Plan to restructure circumscriptions*

In a letter on 30 January 2021, Msgr. Fernando Ocariz asked the faithful of Opus Dei to pray for a project to better spur forward and coordinate the apostolic undertakings of the Prelature. He wrote: "Following the recommendations of the last General Congress, over the last months a study has been carried out regarding the situation of the Prelature's circumscriptions, with a view to

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

forming a plan to better spur forward and coordinate the apostolic undertakings.”

He also noted that, although “Opus Dei is working stably in sixty-eight countries [...] we are aware of the challenges that today's society presents everywhere to the life and spread of Christianity. We all have more or less experience of situations that make the apostolate in some places more arduous. While the good that is done in many places is abundant, we would like our Lord to be able to rely on more hands to help make the joy of the Gospel reach the furthest corner of the world.”

The letter goes on to say that the restructuring project involves “reducing the number of organizational and governmental structures” and will allow for “greater agility and efficiency in the apostolic work” as well as “more attention to caring for people and to each person’s apostolate in his or her own professional, family and social environment, in tandem with the formational activities organized in and from the Prelature’s centers.”

To date (2023), various circumscriptions in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia have been reorganised. The project will continue for a few years to come.

- *Opus Dei approaches the centenary of its foundation*

On 10 June 2021, Msgr. Ocariz encouraged the faithful of Opus Dei to participate in preparations for the centenary of the Work’s foundation, which will take place between 2 October 2028 and 14 February 2030, the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of apostolic activity with women.

In the same letter, he announced that an initial committee had been set up to begin preparing for the celebration, and said that he would like everyone to take part in it. “The centenary will be a time of reflection on our identity, our history and our mission. This should lead each of us to give thanks, to ask for forgiveness, and to make resolutions to improve. We will do so with the approach we learned from our Father: trying to live the present moment with love, with personal and collective humility, serving in the ordinary.”

“This event will also be a propitious moment to consider the challenges faced by the Church and society and to reflect on how we can better contribute

to help solve them. It will be a good time to look to the future and to consider together – you who are youngest will play a fundamental role here – how to bring Opus Dei forward during the next hundred years. It is an opportunity to rejuvenate ourselves, to recognize God's love in our lives and bring this love to others, especially the most needy."

Within the framework of the centenary, an event entitled [Be to Care](#) was held on 29 September 2022 in collaboration with Harambee Africa International. The event provided space for reflection and dialogue about possible responses to the social challenges of our time and took place at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome). About 200 people attended, representing 70 initiatives from 30 countries.

1.5 Selection of social and educational initiatives

The educational, charitable, and cultural initiatives described below are all promoted by faithful of the Prelature and cooperators, along with other people, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Those who undertake and direct these activities – assuming full responsibility for their undertakings, including in its financial aspects – try to respond to the needs of their country or local community, without discriminating on the basis of race, religion or social status.

The Prelature of Opus Dei contributes to the development of these social initiatives, providing pastoral assistance and Christian guidance, always fully respecting freedom of conscience.

Among the works of apostolate directly promoted by Saint Josemaria are secondary schools, universities, medical dispensaries in underdeveloped areas, schools for farm workers, vocational training institutes, student residences, and cultural centres. His successor, Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo, also promoted numerous initiatives of this type. This PDF ([“A Helping Hand”](#)) summarises 40 of these initiatives.

Recent activities of this kind include the following examples:

Yuma Centre (www.yumadc.org), in the heart of Washington D.C. (USA), inspires women to be leaders of character and integrity while encouraging them to discover new perspectives on work and life that bring fulfillment and freedom. Yuma believes that from the moment of birth, to the time of death, women play an integral role in shaping the family, workplaces and the course of civilization. By accompanying women at every life stage, Yuma inspires women to develop personally, professionally and spiritually.

Braval (www.braval.org) and **Terral** (www.terral.org) are centres that provide social and educational support in Raval, a neighbourhood of Barcelona (Spain) particularly affected by immigration. Through a personalised program run by volunteers, young people in the neighbourhood are encouraged to study and take an interest in their own professional development. Braval, which enjoys the support of a number of companies, also helps students find work and secure a job. A multi-ethnic sports program also facilitates the integration between the different cultures present in the neighbourhood.

Iwollo Health Clinic (www.nfh.org.ng) is an extension of Niger Foundation Hospital, Enugu (Nigeria), in Aguobu Iwollo, a rural area that faces serious health problems. It began its activity in 2003. It offers free medical care – including medium-sized surgical interventions – to the entire population of the area, with special attention to women and children. In its own headquarters, the clinic also organises talks on hygiene and illness prevention to locals.

Al Tilal provides professional training that prepares young women from the inner mountains of Lebanon for the working world. It was launched in 2002 in the vicinity of Byblos and is financed by grants from local and foreign foundations. In Al Tilal, Christian and Muslim students work together in harmony. In recent years, the institution has hosted numerous refugees from Syria.

El Centro Educativo Los Pinos (www.lospinos.org.uy), active since 1997 in Casavalle, a marginal area of Montevideo (Uruguay), promotes the integral development of children, adolescents and youth through a variety of educational programs. The goal of Los Pinos is to help students grow academically, professionally, humanly and spiritually and thus strengthen their identity, skills, and abilities.

La Universidad del Istmo (www.unis.edu.gt), began in Guatemala in 1997 as a development of an earlier initiative. At present it has six faculties: Economics and Business, Architecture and Design, Law, Communication, Education and Engineering.

Harambee Africa International (www.harambee-africa.org) was founded in 2002 on the occasion of the canonization of Opus Dei's founder. It is a charitable organisation that supports initiatives run by African institutions, in collaboration with local development aid agencies.

It has supported projects in Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Guinea Bissau, Uganda, Angola, Cameroon, Sao Tome, Mozambique, Congo, Nigeria, Benin, Ivory Coast, Togo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and Sudan with different objectives, from nutritional and medical help for the population to the social reintegration of child soldiers.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

El Centro de Cuidados Laguna (<http://www.lagunacuida.org>), located in the Latina district of Madrid (Spain), was also launched following the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer in 2002 with the aim of helping patients in need of palliative care. It was a pioneer in the field. Today, its services cover the areas of neurology, geriatrics, rehabilitation, advanced paediatric diseases and family assistance, both at home and at the headquarters of Laguna. An extensive network of volunteers collaborates with health professionals who work steadily at the centre. Thanks to the financial support of many people and public and private institutions, Laguna is able to help those who lack the resources to receive the care they require and thus contribute to creating a culture of care in which the elderly and the sick feel cared for, attended to, understood and loved until the last moment of their lives.

Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (www.cite.edu.ph), begun in 1990 in Cebu City (Philippines), is an institution committed to provide training in technical skills and entrepreneurship, values formation, health and social services to the less privileged youth, their families, the local community and the industrial sector of Visayas and Mindanao. CITE offers courses in mechanics, electricity and electronics. It has almost 3,000 graduates, holds international quality certifications and is recognised by the Philippine government as one of the best technical schools in the country.

La Université des Lagunes (www.universite-des-lagunes.org), in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), is an initiative of a local association of jurists. The faculty of legal, political and administrative sciences opened its doors in 2010, and in the years following, the institute has added economic and business sciences, as well as mathematics. The faculty of legal sciences offers, in addition to the bachelor's degree, some masters programs.

2. The Extraordinary General Congress

2.1 Brief description

An extraordinary general congress is an assembly of faithful of Opus Dei, called members of the Congress, with the Prelate, to study and propose decisions on certain questions concerning the life of the Prelature. According to the Statutes of Opus Dei (nos. 130 and 133), an extraordinary congress is one that does not have a fixed periodicity and is convoked when circumstances require it. This is the case of the congress that will take place from 12 to 16 April, convoked by the Prelate with the deliberative vote of his councils to study the adaptation of the Statutes requested by the *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*' (cf. art. 3).

The other two types of congress foreseen in the Statutes are the elective congress, to elect a prelate (who must be confirmed by the Holy See) and the ordinary congress, held every eight years, to evaluate the state of the Prelature, make recommendations about future actions of government, and review the offices of general governance.

2.2 Motu Proprio

This is the official English text of the *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*':

In order to safeguard the charism, my predecessor Saint John Paul II, in the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* of 28 November 1982, erected the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, entrusting it with the pastoral task of contributing in a special way to the evangelizing mission of the Church. Indeed, in accordance with the gift of the Spirit received by Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, with the guidance of its Prelate, carries out the task of spreading the call to holiness in the world, through the sanctification of work and family and social commitments by means of the clerics incardinated therein and with the organic cooperation of the laity who devote themselves to apostolic works (cf. cann. 294-296, *CIC*).

My venerable Predecessor stated that: "With very great hope, the Church directs its attention and maternal care to Opus Dei ...so that it may always be a valid and effective instrument of the saving mission that the Church fulfils for the life of the world" (Cf. Preamble *Ut sit*).

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

This Motu Proprio is intended to confirm the Prelature of *Opus Dei* in the authentically charismatic sphere of the Church, specifying its organization in keeping with the witness of the Founder, Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, and with the teachings of conciliar ecclesiology on personal Prelatures.

By means of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* of 19 March 2022, which reforms the structure of the Roman Curia in order to better promote its service in favour of evangelization, I considered it appropriate to entrust to the Dicastery for the Clergy the competence for all that pertains to the Apostolic See regarding personal Prelatures, of which the only one erected so far is that of *Opus Dei*, considering the pre-eminent task carried out in it, according to the norm of law, by clerics (cf. can. 294, *CIC*).

Wishing, therefore, to protect the charism of *Opus Dei* and to promote the evangelizing action carried out by its members in the world, and at the same time having to adapt the provisions relating to the Prelature to the new organization of the Roman Curia, I order the following norms be observed.

Art. 1. The text of Art. 5 of the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* shall henceforth be replaced by the following text: "*In accordance with Art. 117 of the Apostolic Constitution Praedicate Evangelium, the Prelature depends on the Dicastery for the Clergy, which, according to the subject matter, shall evaluate the relative questions with the other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The Dicastery for the Clergy, in dealing with the various questions, shall make use of the competencies of the other Dicasteries through appropriate consultation or transfer of files.*"

Art. 2. The text of Article 6 of the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* shall henceforth be replaced by the following text: "*Each year the Prelate shall submit to the Dicastery for the Clergy a report on the state of the Prelature and on the fulfilment of its apostolic work.*"

Art. 3. By reason of the amendments to the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* brought about by this Apostolic Letter, the proper Statutes of the Prelature of *Opus Dei* shall be suitably adapted upon the proposal of the Prelature itself, to be approved by the competent bodies of the Apostolic See.

Art. 4. While fully respecting the nature of the specific charism described in the above-mentioned Apostolic Constitution, it is intended to strengthen the conviction that, for the protection of the particular gift of the Spirit, a form of governance based on charism more than on hierarchical authority is needed. Therefore, the Prelate shall not be honoured with the episcopal order.

Art. 5. Considering that the pontifical insignia are reserved for those who are conferred the episcopal order, the Prelate of *Opus Dei* is granted, by reason of his office, the use of the title of Supernumerary Apostolic Protonotary with the title of Reverend Monsignor and therefore may use the insignia corresponding to this title.

Art. 6. As from the entry into force of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, all matters pending at the Congregation for Bishops concerning the Prelature of Opus Dei shall continue to be dealt with and decided by the Dicastery for the Clergy.

I decree that this Apostolic Letter in the form of a *Motu Proprio* be promulgated by publication in *L'Osservatore Romano*, entering into force on 4 August 2022, and then published in the official commentary of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 14 July 2022, the tenth year of the Pontificate.

FRANCIS

2.3 Chronology

The following are some relevant recent events in the juridical path of Opus Dei:

28 November 1982: St. John Paul II establishes Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature with the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*.

19 March 2022: Pope Francis reforms the organisation of the Roman Curia with the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*. Article 117 of the constitution changes the dependence of personal prelatures from the Congregation for Bishops to the Dicastery for the Clergy.

14 July 2022: The Holy See publishes Pope Francis's apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*.' The letter states, among other things, that "the proper Statutes of the Prelature of Opus Dei shall be suitably adapted upon the proposal of the Prelature itself, to be approved by the competent bodies of the Apostolic See" (article 3).

4 August 2022: The *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*' enters into force.

6 October 2022: In [a letter](#), Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz announces that he will convokes an Extraordinary General Congress of the Prelature "to carry out what the Pope asked of us regarding bringing the Statutes of the Work into line with the *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*.'" He asks for "contributions [from] those who wish to send specific suggestions" to prepare for the "this work of the men and women who will take part in this Congress."

7 January 2023: The Prelate of Opus Dei announces that the Extraordinary General Congress will take place in Rome from 12 to 16 April 2023.

12-16 April 2023: Celebration of the Extraordinary General Congress in Rome, beginning with Holy Mass on 12 April. From 12 to 16 April, the proposal for redrafting the numbers of the Statutes deemed necessary in light of the request in '*Ad charisma tuendum*' will be studied and voted on.

2.4 Letter from the Prelate, 30-III-2023

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

As you know, during Easter week the Extraordinary General Congress will take place to adapt the Statutes of the Prelature to the *motu proprio* 'Ad charisma tuendum.' I am very grateful for your contribution during these past months, with your prayer for this work, and also with your preparation and sending of the many suggestions that have been received. I ask you to continue praying for the preparation and efforts of this General Congress, and for its outcome, which must help us to renew our desire to carry out Opus Dei, in the service of God and the Church throughout the world.

The suggestions have been studied in Rome, with the help of experts, both women and men, in order to present specific proposals at the Congress. Those that were not relevant to the request of the Holy See contained in the *motu proprio* can be considered, as I mentioned in my October message, during the next Work Weeks, when they are organized, and will help to prepare the next Ordinary General Congress in 2025. They are very valuable material, for which I again want to thank you.

During these days, the meetings of the congress women and men will be held in parallel and I will take part in both, together with the Vicars. They will take place in the Roman College of Holy Mary and the Roman College of the Holy Cross. Both will begin with Holy Mass. In successive sessions, the proposals that have been prepared will be studied and on the last day the final text will be voted on. We will finish with benediction with the Blessed Sacrament and the praying of the *Te Deum*.

Unlike other General Congresses, whether elective (where the Prelate is elected) or ordinary (where some apostolic priorities are set), in this case it won't be possible to communicate immediately the final result, since it must be sent to the Dicastery for the Clergy to be studied by the Holy See, who is responsible for approving it.

All the General Congresses are very special moments of unity among the entire Work, and of the Work with the Holy Father and with the whole Church. During these weeks, we want our Father's aspiration to be especially present: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam*.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Fernando

Rome, 30 March 2023

3. Q&A

A list of questions and, over the next few pages, their respective answers.

3.1 About the Extraordinary General Congress

- *What is an Extraordinary General Congress?*
- *Why is the Extraordinary General Congress being called?*
- *Who is competent to modify the Statutes of Opus Dei?*
- *What does it mean that the Holy See is the legislator?*
- *What result can be expected from the congress?*
- *Who is summoned to the congress?*

3.2 About the motu proprio 'Ad charisma tuendum'

- *What is the purpose of this motu proprio?*
- *What does the motu proprio 'Ad charisma tuendum' mean for the life of the faithful of the Prelature?*
- *Why does 'Ad charisma tuendum' insist on the "charism" of Opus Dei? Are charism and hierarchy opposing realities?*
- *How do charism and hierarchy complement each other in Opus Dei?*
- *Does something in the Prelature's governance change?*
- *Why is it stated that the Prelate will not be a bishop?*
- *What does the title of "Supernumerary Apostolic Protonotary" mentioned in the motu proprio refer to?*

– ***What is an Extraordinary General Congress?***

The Statutes of Opus Dei (nos. 130 and 133) establish three types of general congresses:

- a) The elective congress, which elects the Prelate, who must be confirmed by the Holy See;
- b) The ordinary, every eight years, held every eight years, to evaluate the state of the Prelature, make recommendations about future actions of government, and review the offices of general governance;
- c) The extraordinary, which does not have a fixed periodicity and is convoked by the Prelate with the deliberative vote of his councils, when circumstances require it. This is the case of the congress that will take place from 12 to 16 April (the Prelate announced the dates in a message dated 7-I-2023).

– ***Why is the Extraordinary General Congress being called?***

It is being convened to comply with the provisions of article 3 of the *motu proprio* 'Ad charisma tuendum' (14-VII-2022). On 6 October, the Prelate announced the upcoming congress thus: "With the favorable opinion of the Central Advisory and the General Council, I will convene an Extraordinary General Congress with that precise and limited purpose, which will take place in the first half of 2023" (Letter, 6-X-2022).

In the same letter, he described the next steps and the type of changes expected: "In the Dicastery for the Clergy we have been advised not to limit ourselves to considering only what refers to the dependence of the Prelature on this Dicastery and the change from every five years to annual reporting to the Holy See on the Prelature's activities. We should also propose other possible adjustments to the Statutes that seem appropriate in light of the *motu proprio*. We have also been advised to spend as much time as necessary without any hurry."

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

– ***Who is competent to modify the Statutes of Opus Dei?***

Reforms to the Statutes are foreseen in no. 181 of the text, which reserves both changes and the introduction of new provisions to the Holy See, at the request of the General Congress of Opus Dei.

When the initiative for the change is the Prelature's, to guarantee the juridical certainty of the need for these changes, the Statutes stipulate that they be proposed and ratified in three General Congresses (no. 181, § 3).

Since, in this case, it is the Holy See itself that has requested proposals of modifications, it is not necessary to follow this procedure; the proposal can be made in one extraordinary congress.

– ***What does it mean that the Holy See is the legislator?***

It means that the Holy See has the competence to establish personal prelatures (through an apostolic constitution) and, at the same time, establish and promulgate the statutes of the prelature erected (canon 295, Code of Canon Law).

Unlike in other entities, the statutes of personal prelatures are established and promulgated by virtue of legislative power (the Church's power to give norms of the highest level), as indicated by the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church (canon 94 § 3). In this case, the statutes are properly considered laws and their drafting necessarily involves the authority that promulgates them (the Holy See).

The drafting, modification, and introduction of new precepts are reserved to the Holy See, though they may be proposed by the Prelature of Opus Dei.

– ***What result can be expected from the congress?***

Since the Pope is the legislator of all statutes of personal prelatures, no public communication of the final proposal for the modification of the Statutes by Opus Dei is expected. Rather, it will be presented directly to the Dicastery for the Clergy.

– ***Who is summoned to the congress?***

All the members of the congress, men and women, appointed according to the Statutes (nos. 130, § 2 and 133, § 3) are summoned. To be a member of the congress, one must be at least 32 years of age and have been definitively incorporated into the Prelature for at least 9 years. They are appointed by the Prelate from among the faithful in the countries where the Work exercises its apostolate, with the deliberative vote of the central governing bodies (the Council for men and Advisory for women), taking the opinion of the person's circumscription of origin into account. All the members of the congress are numeraries, and a large majority of them have done or are currently doing government work in the Prelature in the various circumscriptions. This facilitates their knowledge of the apostolic challenges of the places where they live and work.

Other faithful of the Prelature may also be called by the Prelate to collaborate as experts, having a voice but no vote (no. 130, § 4).

There are 274 members of the congress, 126 women (46%) and 148 men (54%). They come from Africa (6.6%), Asia (6.2%), Europe (50%), North and South America (36%), and Oceania (1.1%). This proportion corresponds to the total number of faithful of Opus Dei living in the respective continents.

90 priests will attend, representing 32.8% of the members of the congress. In elective congresses, the prelate is elected from among the priests who are members of the congress.

Regarding the age range, the youngest member of the congress is 35 years old and the oldest is 87 years old.

– ***What is the purpose of this motu proprio?***

The *motu proprio* "Ad charisma tuendum" ("For the protection of the charism") develops and concretizes the change brought about by the Apostolic Constitution "Praedicate Evangelium" in transferring the competencies regarding personal prelatures from the Dicastery for Bishops to the Dicastery for the Clergy. Both the title and the introduction convey the Holy Father's determination that this change be carried out while fully respecting the charism of Opus Dei.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS
OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

- ***What does the *motu proprio* ‘Ad charisma tuendum’ mean for the life of the faithful of the Prelature?***

The *motu proprio* is a call to become aware of the potential of Opus Dei’s charism in the Church’s mission. As the Holy Father says, “according to the gift of the Spirit received by Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the Prelature of Opus Dei, with the guidance of the Prelate himself, fulfils the mission of spreading the call to holiness in the world, through the sanctification of work and of family and social duties.” Since it is the Pope himself who reminds us of this responsibility, the faithful of Opus Dei will be moved to delve ever deeper into this charism and discern, with the light of the Holy Spirit, how to incarnate it in the new situations of our world.

- ***Why does ‘Ad charisma tuendum’ insist on the “charism” of Opus Dei? Are charism and hierarchy opposing realities?***

As Vatican II says, the Holy Spirit makes use of hierarchical and charismatic gifts to guide the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 4). This *motu proprio* reaffirms the charism of Opus Dei received by Saint Josemaría Escrivá, and its mission to help build up the Church. Some gifts are at the service of others, and the Church needs all of them. And throughout history, she has wisely found ways to enrich and protect them reciprocally.

The *motu proprio* reminds us that the government of Opus Dei must be at the service of the charism – of which we are administrators, not owners – so that it may grow and bear fruit, confident that it is God who works all things in all people.

- ***How do charism and hierarchy complement each other in Opus Dei?***

The charism of Opus Dei consists in spiritually helping all people, men and women, from all backgrounds and professions, to sanctify themselves where they are, and to help them spread the universal call to holiness in the middle of the world, and solely on account of having been baptized. Therefore, the faithful of the Prelature do not form or act in a group because they belong to Opus Dei.

The charism of Opus Dei needs priestly ministry: this is where the hierarchy must intervene. Therefore, as Pope Francis now recalls, “to safeguard the charism, my predecessor Saint John Paul II, in the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*

on November 28, 1982, erected the Prelature of Opus Dei, entrusting to it the pastoral task of contributing in a special way to the evangelizing mission of the Church.” With the progressive maturation and assimilation of the Council’s teachings on the hierarchical and charismatic gifts, it will become increasingly clear that, far from being in opposition to each other, in Opus Dei they are complementary realities.

– ***Does anything change in the Prelature’s governance?***

The change is in the Prelature’s relations with the Holy See. The *Motu Proprio* does not directly introduce modifications in the governance of the Prelature, nor in the relations of the authorities of the Prelature with the bishops. At the same time, it foresees that Opus Dei will propose an adaptation of the Statutes in accord with the indications of the *motu proprio*.

– ***Why is it stated that the Prelate will not be a bishop?***

This is an initiative and decision of the Holy See, within the framework of a restructuring of the government of the Curia, to strengthen – as the *motu proprio* says – the charismatic dimension.

– ***What does the title of “Supernumerary Apostolic Protonotary” mentioned in the motu proprio refer to?***

The figure of the Prelate receives an honorary title and position that, while reaffirming his secular condition (which is central to the charism of Opus Dei), unites him in a special way to the Holy Father, as part of the so-called “pontifical family.” The title “supernumerary” distinguishes him from those who are notaries in the Holy See.

3.3 Pope Francis, Opus Dei, and '*Ad charisma tuendum*'

Here are three recent comments from the Pope in the media, responding to questions about Opus Dei and the *motu proprio* '*Ad charisma tuendum*'.

– *Interview with ABC (18 December 2022)*

"The measure is a relocation that had to be solved. I am a good friend of Opus Dei, I love them and they do good work," the Holy Father says of his decision to change some aspects of the Work.

- *How should we interpret the changes you have asked them to make at Opus Dei?*

It is not just a matter of Opus Dei, but of the personal prelature. In the scheme of the Curia, Opus Dei depended on the Congregation of Bishops, but in the Code of Canon Law, a prelature is framed differently, and the criteria needed to be unified. We studied the matter and we said, "Let the prelature go to the Dicastery for the Clergy." I did this in dialogue with them. Also, since my time in Argentina I am a friend of Mariano Fazio (Vicar General of Opus Dei). It was a serene, normal thing done by canonists, we even had canonists from Opus Dei working in the process.

- *The decision resounded far and loud.*

Some from one camp were saying, "At last the Pope got to them at Opus Dei...!" I didn't get to them! And in the other camp there were those who cried out, "Ah, the Pope is invading us!" Nothing of the sort. The measure is a relocation that had to be solved. It is not right to make such a fuss, neither to portray them as victims or as prisoners who received punishment. Now please... I am a good friend of Opus Dei, I love them and they do a good job in the Church. The good they do is huge.

– *"El pastor", Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti, Ediciones B, March 2023 (the text that follows is an unofficial translation)*

As part of this reform, you issued a decree modifying Opus Dei's relationship with the Vatican, which has been a "personal prelature"

depending directly on the Pope since 1982; it no longer does. In addition, you stipulated that its superior would no longer be a bishop, as had been the case. There are those who say that "the Work" has been downgraded...

— I disagree. This is a typically worldly interpretation, far from the religious dimension. For one thing, Opus Dei (which remains a prelature) is not the only one to have undergone a reorganisation during my pontificate. I am thinking, for example, of Communion and Liberation, the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Focolare Movement. Opus Dei used to report to the Congregation for Bishops, but now it will report to the Congregation for the Clergy, as is the case for all personal prelatures. This means that the report on its work will no longer be every five years, but yearly. As for the fact that whoever is at the head will no longer be promoted to the episcopate, the decision - as the decree clearly states - is intended to reinforce a form of government based not so much on hierarchical authority, but above all on the charism which, in the case of Opus Dei, involves seeking sanctification through work and family and social commitments.

— *Vatican News (22 July 2022)*

Motu Proprio on Opus Dei to protect charism and promote evangelization

With the document "Ad charisma tuendum," as of August 4, Pope Francis disposes that the Prelature of Opus Dei transfer competencies from the Dicastery for Bishops and establishes that the Prelate can no longer hold episcopal status. Prelate Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz says the Pope asks that the new Prelate "be a guide but above all a father."

Forty years after the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit*, with which Pope St. John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature, Pope Francis modifies some of its structures on the basis of *Praedicate Evangelium*, with the aim of "protecting the charism" and "promoting the evangelizing action that its members carry out in the world" by spreading "the call to holiness in the world, through the sanctification of work and family and social commitments."

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI

The Motu Proprio *Ad charisma tuendum*, promulgated today, establishes new orientations that see the amendment of some *Ut sit*'s articles, harmonizing them with what has been established by the recent Apostolic Constitution.

Charism rather than hierarchical authority

First of all, based on Article 117 of Praedicate Evangelium, the Vatican Dicastery of reference for Opus Dei will no longer be the one for Bishops but the one for the Clergy, to which the Prelate, the highest Opus Dei authority, will submit an annual report on the state of the Prelature. The Prelate himself, contrary to the past, will no longer be able to be appointed a bishop, and this, the Motu Proprio explains in Article 4, is to "reinforce the conviction that, for the protection of the peculiar gift of the Spirit, a form of government based more on charism than on hierarchical authority is needed." So, the title the Prelate of Opus Dei will take on, will be that of Apostolic Protonotary Supernumerary with the title of Reverend Monsignor.

In tune with the founder

Recalling the "very great hope" with which the Church directed "her maternal care and attention toward Opus Dei" at the time of its establishment as a Prelature, according to Pope John Paul II's description on that occasion, this Motu proprio adds to the text of the papal document: "it is intended to confirm the Prelature of Opus Dei in the authentically charismatic sphere of the Church, specifying its organization in keeping with the witness of the Founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, and with the teachings of conciliar ecclesiology regarding Personal Prelatures." These provisions will go into effect starting next August 4.

Monsignor Ocariz: new Prelate "guide, but, first and foremost, father"

In a letter sent to the members of the Prelature, Opus Dei Prelate, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, says he "filially" accepts what Pope Francis has ordered, and expresses his hope that the Pope's invitation "will resonate powerfully with each and everyone" as an "opportunity to understand, in depth, the spirit that the Lord instilled in our founder",

and he asks them to share it with family, friends and professional contacts.

Regarding the figure of the Prelate, while expressing thanks "for the fruits of ecclesial communion that the episcopate of Blessed Álvaro and Fr. Javier represented," Monsignor Ocáriz acknowledges that "the episcopal ordination of the prelate was not and is not necessary to lead Opus Dei. The Pope's will to emphasize the charismatic dimension of Opus Dei invites us to strengthen an environment of familial affection and trust: "the Prelate must be a guide, but, first and foremost, a father."

Questions and answers to understand the change

The Prelate's letter is accompanied by a series of eight questions and related answers on the meaning of the Motu Proprio and its most direct implications on the lives of Prelature members. Specifically, on the relationship between charism and hierarchy, it is stressed that in the Motu proprio "it is recalled that the government of Opus Dei must be at the service of the charism - of which we are stewards, and not owners - so that it may grow and bear fruit, with the faith that it is God who works in all."

4. Other resources

4.1 Information on www.opusdei.org

On the website of Opus Dei, a new page has been opened with information related to the [Extraordinary General Congress](#).

4.2 Photos

- [Opus Dei on Flickr](#)

4.3 Videos

- [The Charism of Opus Dei in St. Josemaría's Words](#)
- [The Heart of Work: St. Josemaría's Vision](#)
- [Activities of Opus Dei](#)
- What is Opus Dei? (in one minute) [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Portuguese](#)
- Video about the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- [Working Together](#), a video about the cooperators of Opus Dei

4.4 Contacts

Press Office of Opus Dei in Rome

Via dei Farnesi 91 A I-00186 Roma

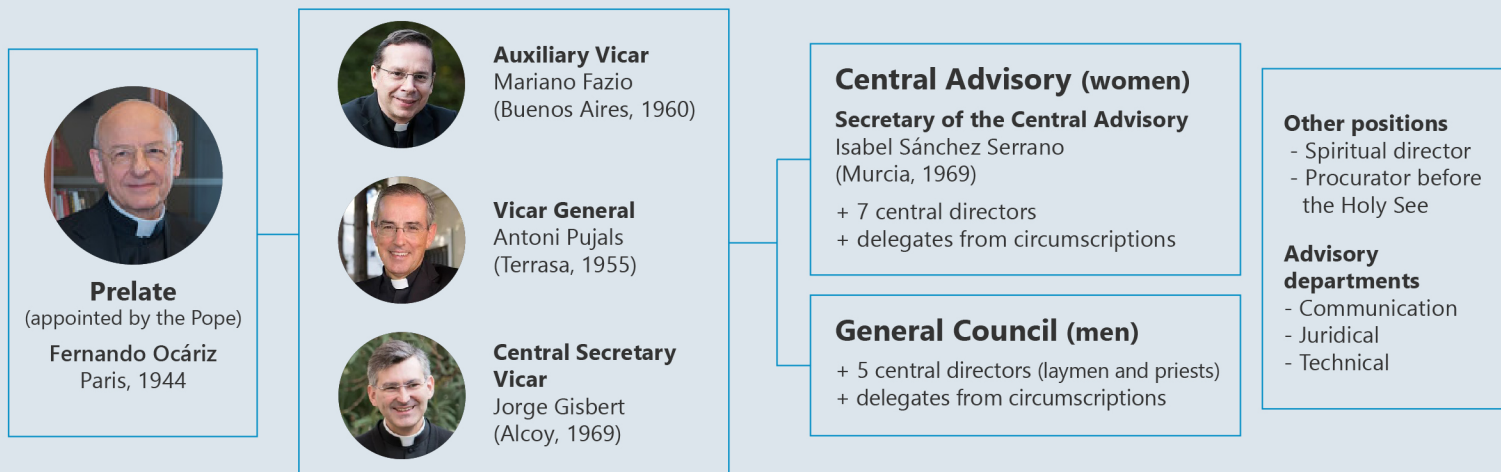
Manuel Sánchez: +39 333 47 88 131

Leticia Sánchez de León: +39 327 46 04 950

Email: international@opusdei.org

HOW IS OPUS DEI GOVERNED?

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT



REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

In each one of the 33 regions, which include a total of 68 countries, there is a regional government structure. Some regions are further divided into delegations. They follow the central government structure and are made up of:



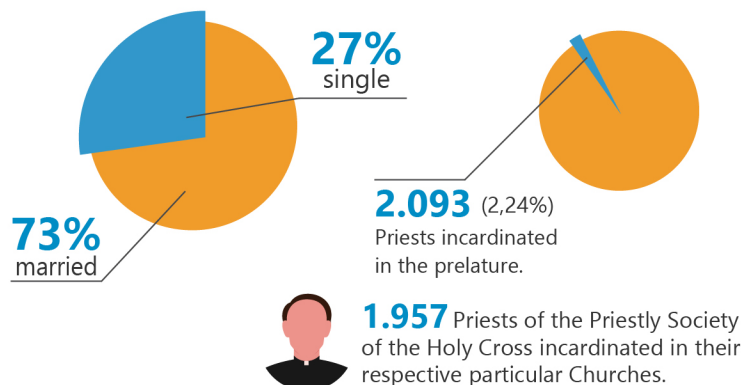
SOME DATA

93.600

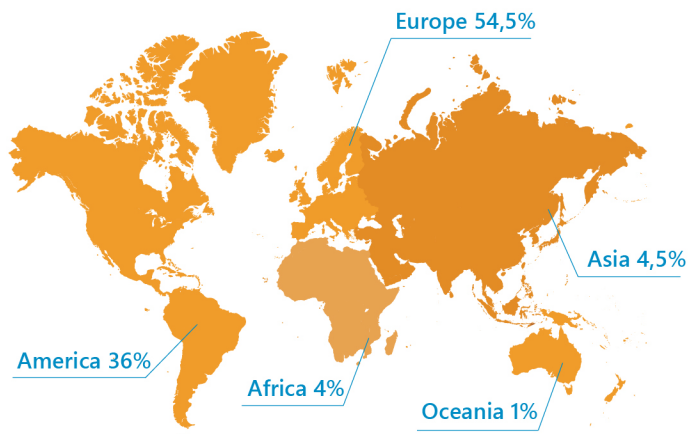
people worldwide form part of Opus Dei.
Approximately 60% women, 40% men.

600.000

Approximate number of cooperators and those taking part in means of Christian formation. Many other people benefit from the work of the prelature through the parishes entrusted to priests of Opus Dei, or through the social and educational initiatives that receive pastoral attention from the prelature.



DISTRIBUTION BY CONTINENT



THE MESSAGE OF OPUS DEI

- Opus Dei inspires the search for and meeting with God at work, in family life and in all other ordinary activities.

- St Josemaria founded Opus Dei in 1928. He preached to workers, married men and women, students and priests, that ordinary life was the setting where the majority of Christians should imitate Jesus Christ. The keys to his message are the sanctification of work, prayer and service to others, unity of life and, especially, knowing ourselves to be children of God and of the Church.

MORE INFORMATION

Official Website available on 35 languages www.opusdei.org
Bulletin of the prelature of Opus Dei www.romana.org

© Nicolás Sangrador Andreu. Fundación Studium 2023



Sanctification
of work



Finding God in
ordinary life



Charity and
service



Love for the Church
and for the Pope

OPUS DEI

