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Questions & Answers about the Ordinary General Congress (2025)

We offer some questions and answers prepared by the Opus Dei Information Office about the 10th Ordinary General Congress, which will take place from April 23 to May 5, 2025.

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About the Ordinary General Congress

- What is an Ordinary General Congress? When have previous congresses taken place?
- What topics will be studied in the 2025 Ordinary General Congress?
- How will the Congress be structured?
- Who is summoned to the Congress?

About the Regional Assemblies

- One of the themes of the Congress mentions the regional assemblies. What are they?
- When did the regional assemblies begin?

- How does one participate in a regional assembly?
- Did the 2024 Regional Assemblies have a particular theme?
- How were the 2024 Regional Assemblies carried out?

About the Statutes of Opus Dei

- Why did the Holy See ask for the Statutes to be adapted?
- Who has the authority to modify the Statutes of Opus Dei?
- What is the Congress's role in relation to the Statutes?
- How has the process of adapting the Statutes unfolded? What are the next steps?
- Will any information about the Statutes be shared at the end of the Congress?

- How important is juridical structure in the life of an institution?
- Some observers interpreted the new regulations on personal prelatures as restricting their influence. Is there any truth to that interpretation?
- How might the eventual modifications to the Statutes affect members of the Work in their daily lives?

Other questions and answers

- About the motu proprio *Ad charisma tuendum*
 - About the motu proprio regarding personal prelatures
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About the Ordinary General Congress

What is an Ordinary General Congress? When have previous congresses taken place?

In accordance with the Statutes of Opus Dei, Ordinary General Congresses are celebrated every eight years to take stock and to provide guidelines for the evangelizing activity of the Prelature's faithful, both priests and laity (men and women, married and single). During the Congress, appointments are also renewed for the tasks on the General Council and the Central Advisory.

The last Ordinary General Congress (the 9th) took place immediately after the elective General Congress of January 2017, during which Msgr.

Fernando Ocáriz was elected and subsequently appointed Prelate of Opus Dei by Pope Francis. On February 14, 2017, Msgr. Ocáriz published a letter outlining the main conclusions of that Congress. The previous Congress (the 8th) was in April 2010.

What topics will be studied in the 2025 Ordinary General Congress?

The Prelate of Opus Dei has explained (message, January 25, 2025) that the two main themes will be: deepening the proposal for modifications to the Statutes requested by the Holy See, and studying the conclusions of the Regional Assemblies that have taken place over the past year in all of the Prelature's territorial circumscriptions.

How will the Congress be structured?

The Congress has two sessions – one for men and one for women – with similar programmes. In the first part of the Congress, the Prelate will inform participants about the apostolic and formational activity since the last ordinary General Congress, and about the implementation of the priorities outlined in the letter of February 2017. Particular attention will be given to the current status of the work to revise the Statutes of Opus Dei, which will subsequently be submitted to the Holy See for approval.

The second part of the Congress will be dedicated to studying the conclusions and proposals that emerged from the regional assemblies held throughout 2024 in all the Prelature's circumscriptions.

A concluding document will then be drafted and submitted to a vote by the male and female participants, respectively.

Additionally, in each session, the members of the General Council and the Central Advisory of Opus Dei (respectively) are either newly appointed or their appointment is renewed, following the Prelate's proposal to the Congress. Once the Congress has concluded, the Prelate and his central governing bodies will review all appointments to regional government.

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 279 members of the congress, 127 women (45.5%) and 152 men (54.5%). They come from Africa (6.8%), Asia (5.7%), Europe (48.7%), North and South America (37.3%), and Oceania (1.4%). This proportion corresponds to the total number of faithful of Opus Dei living in the respective continents. 95 priests will attend, representing 34% of the members of the congress. Regarding the age range, the youngest member of the congress is 37 years old and the oldest is 91 years old.

About the Regional Assemblies

One of the themes of the Congress mentions the regional assemblies. What are they?

Regional assemblies, also known as work weeks, are a tool provided in the Statutes of Opus Dei (nos. 162-170) for studying the most relevant topics for the formation and apostolic mission of its members in each circumscription and taking stock of the time elapsed since the previous assembly (no. 162). These assemblies, convened every ten years, are called by the regional vicar by mandate of the Prelate (no. 164). They are a consultative instrument, allowing the collection of reflections and opinions from all the faithful of the Work in order to promote the

apostolic work in each country and historical period.

The initial phase, fostering broad participation, involves the preparation of experiences, suggestions, proposals, etc. on the proposed theme, by the faithful of the Prelature, cooperators, and friends (no. 167).

After the initial phase, which should last at least two months, a phase of compilation and synthesis of all proposals, including those from the participants in the final phase, begins in order to create the working document for the concluding meeting (no. 168).

Then the concluding phase begins with the meeting of the individuals convoked (no. 166), presided over by the Prelate or his delegate (no. 165).

The conclusions of the assembly are sent to the Prelate (no. 169); upon his

approval, they become material for the ordinary governance of the circumscription and are of great importance in preparing the ordinary general congresses, held every eight years to study the state of the Prelature and propose governance actions.

When did the regional assemblies begin?

The account of the beginnings is detailed in the article “Work Weeks in the Foundational Years” published in *Studia et Documenta* by the Historical Institute of St. Josemaría. The first assembly was convened by St. Josemaría in 1943 in Madrid (Spain), with the participation of 16 individuals; the first one for women took place in 1948. Since 1955, they have been held regularly in each circumscription.

How does one participate in a regional assembly?

From the beginning, St. Josemaría understood the importance of having everyone participate, as is expressed in point 167 of the Statutes. The mode and method for participation is established in each region, and includes various formats: conversations, formational activities, group meetings, etc., ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Did the 2024 Regional Assemblies have a particular theme?

The theme of the 2024 Regional Assemblies was, “On the Road to the Centenary of the Work.” The aim was to encourage people in Opus Dei, cooperators, and friends to reflect on evangelisation projects for the

coming years, how to respond to the challenges of our time in light of the spirit of Opus Dei and how to celebrate the upcoming centenary of the Work locally (beginning in 2028). The document “On the road to the centenary of the Work. Going more deeply into our charism and renewing our desire to serve God, the Church, and society” provided a starting point for participants’ contributions.

How were the 2024 Regional Assemblies carried out?

In total, nearly 55,000 people from 70 countries submitted their suggestions. Additionally, around 3,000 working groups were organized to discuss various topics related to living out the message of Opus Dei, as well as the challenges and ways to strengthen apostolic work. The three key themes that emerged most frequently in these

discussions were family, work, and formation for the mission. Many other relevant topics were also considered, ranging from pressing social needs in different countries and the Church's main evangelization challenges to aspects of Opus Dei's message that could be further explored.

Among other conclusions, participants highlighted that the key contributions of Opus Dei's formation are: fostering an encounter with Christ in daily life, providing spiritual accompaniment, and offering theological and doctrinal formation on the Christian message, in order to transform the world from within. All the materials compiled during the final meetings of the assemblies will serve as the foundation for the Ordinary General Congress this year. More information [here](#).

About the Statutes of Opus Dei

Why did the Holy See ask for the Statutes to be adapted?

The revision of the Statutes of Opus Dei is part of a broader reform of the Roman Curia. In 2022, Pope Francis promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, which restructured the Roman Curia and emphasized its missionary service. As part of this reform, the responsibilities of various Dicastries were reorganized; among other changes, the Dicastery for the Clergy assumed oversight of personal prelatures. A few months later, Pope Francis issued the motu proprio *Ad charisma tuendum*, followed in 2023 by another motu proprio titled “On the modification of canons 295–296

concerning personal prelatures.” The Statutes need to be aligned with the provisions of these two *motu proprio*. *Ad charisma tuendum* states 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.”

Who has the authority to modify the Statutes of Opus Dei?

The authority to modify the Statutes or to introduce new provisions rests with the Holy See, either at its own initiative or at the request of the General Congress of Opus Dei (cf. Statutes, no. 181). 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). In this case, since it is the Holy See that has requested the proposed modifications, the procedure and timeline established in no. 181, §3 do not apply.

What is the Congress's role in relation to the Statutes?

The Holy See, through the Dicastery for the Clergy, considered it appropriate that, given that there was to be an Ordinary Congress during the ongoing review of the Statutes, the Congress should have an opportunity to examine the final draft of the revisions before submitting it to the Holy See for approval. Thus the Congress' role is primarily consultative.

How has the process of adapting the Statutes unfolded? What are the next steps?

The process has unfolded in two stages. The first, in 2023, involved a general consultation with all members of Opus Dei regarding possible adjustments to the Statutes in light of *Ad charisma tuendum*.

Based on the suggestions received, a draft was prepared and submitted to the Extraordinary Congress convened for this purpose by Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz in April 2023.

Following the publication of a second motu proprio in August 2023 (“On the modification of canons 295–296 concerning personal prelatures”), a second stage began. This phase involved the formation of two working groups of experts: one from the Dicastery for the Clergy and the

other from the Prelature of Opus Dei. The approach was based on two guiding principles: first, filial obedience to the directives of ecclesiastical authority, and second, safeguarding the charism of Opus Dei, as Pope Francis urged in the introduction to *Ad charisma tuendum*.

After a series of study sessions and working meetings between both parties, the Prelature submitted a proposed version of the Statutes with the relevant modifications. Based on the Dicastery's observations, a final text will be prepared which, after the aforementioned Ordinary Congress, will be submitted once more to the Holy See. The Holy Father is likely to move forward with their approval after this.

Will any information about the Statutes be shared at the end of the Congress?

Once the Statutes have been approved by the Holy See, the updated text and ample explanatory material will be made available on the website. Understandably, however, the Prelature cannot share details before the Statutes are approved by the Pope, who is the competent legislator. Therefore, there are no plans for a public release of the final proposed modifications to the Statutes by Opus Dei; the matter will be entrusted entirely to the Holy See.

How important is juridical structure in the life of an institution?

Juridical structure is important for any institution within the Church.

Opus Dei can be viewed both from a juridical and a charismatic perspective. One of the purposes of canon law is to safeguard the charism and to establish the most suitable conditions for it to bear fruit for the good of the whole Church, contributing to evangelisation in accordance with the particular characteristics of its charism.

Some observers interpreted the new regulations on personal prelatures as restricting their influence. Is there any truth to that interpretation?

Pope Francis was asked this very question in a book-length interview. He responded: “I do not agree. It is a typically worldly interpretation, alien to the religious dimension. For one thing, Opus Dei – which remains a prelate – 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 personal prelatures. This means that the report on its work will no longer be five-yearly, but annual. 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” (*El pastor*, Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti, Ediciones B, March 2023, our translation).

How might the eventual modifications to the Statutes affect members of the Work in their daily lives?

We will only know the effects of the modifications after the Holy See issued the updated Statutes, but in members' daily lives, the aim is precisely to safeguard the essential elements of the charism.

The *motu proprio* requesting these modifications is a call to become more deeply aware of the potential of Opus Dei's charism in the Church's mission. As the Holy Father says, "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."

Being reminded of this by the Pope himself will encourage the faithful of Opus Dei all the more to deepen their understanding of the charism and to discern, with the light of the Holy Spirit, how to incarnate it in new situations in our world.

Other questions and answers

About the motu proprio *Ad charisma tuendum* ([here](#))

About the motu proprio regarding personal prelatures ([here](#))

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