

Questions about Opus Dei in east Africa

Frequently Asked Questions
about Opus Dei

03/17/2009

What is Opus Dei?

Opus Dei is a personal prelature of the Catholic Church. Its mission is to spread the message that all Christians are called by God to make Jesus Christ known and to seek holiness in and through their daily work, family life and social relations.

To help people carry out this message, Opus Dei offers specialized pastoral care through classes, talks, spiritual direction, retreats, etc. This formation fosters the exercise of human and Christian virtues. Work should be done well for love of God and should be seen as a service toward all who are touched by it. Opus Dei's name is Latin for "Work of God."

Why did the Church make Opus Dei a personal prelature?

Because it did not fit properly into canonical categories for religious orders and lay associations. Personal prelatures are ecclesiastical jurisdictions that are created to meet specific pastoral needs with greater flexibility. Opus Dei combines in a single worldwide institution priests and laity, women and men, sharing the same vocation of spreading the

ideal of holiness in the world and the sanctification of work.

How does one get involved in Opus Dei?

To learn about Opus Dei's activities of spiritual formation in your area, please fill in the message form below, indicating where you are writing from and any other details you wish to include. Opus Dei's activities of spiritual formation, conducted separately for women and men, are organized at times and places compatible with the professional and family obligations of those attending them.

How does one join Opus Dei?

Membership in Opus Dei requires a supernatural vocation. It is a personal call from God to place one's whole life at his service, spreading the message of the universal call to holiness in ordinary work and social

life. Members join by a contractual commitment rather than by vows, and remain ordinary faithful of their dioceses. This vocation is usually discerned after being involved in Opus Dei's activities (retreats, classes, spiritual direction) regularly over a period of time, which enables one to acquire an in-depth knowledge of Opus Dei. It is also important to acquire consistency in the Christian practices to which members commit themselves: frequent reception of the sacraments, prayer, apostolate and, in general, a humble and constant effort to acquire virtue and struggle for holiness in keeping with the spirit of Opus Dei. Adult Catholics, men or women, married or single, of any background, nationality or socio-economic condition, may be incorporated in the Prelature.

Are there different kinds of members of Opus Dei?

One can be incorporated in the Opus Dei Prelature as an associate, a numerary or a supernumerary. Associates and numeraries commit themselves to celibacy; supernumeraries do not. But all the faithful of the Prelature share the same vocation of spreading the ideal of holiness in the middle of the world. Most members are married, and they strive to follow Jesus Christ by sanctifying their work both in the home and outside, maintaining a youthful love, generously receiving the children God sends them, educating their children well and transmitting the faith to them with their charity and their example. For apostolic motives, some lay men and women embrace celibacy as a gift from God. This enables them to dedicate themselves more to tasks of formation, without any change in their lay condition, their professional situation, or their position within the Church and society.

Can priests join Opus Dei?

Secular priests who are already incardinated in a diocese cannot belong to the Opus Dei Prelature, but they can become part of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, an association that is inseparably joined to the Prelature. Their incorporation into the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross does not affect their diocesan status. They remain clergy of their diocese, subject to their bishop just as they were before. They commit themselves to the pursuit of sanctity in the exercise of their priesthood, according to the spirit of Opus Dei, and they strive to be especially united to their bishop and their fellow priests.

Who are Cooperators?

Through their prayer, work or donations, Cooperators assist the educational and social undertakings promoted by the Prelature's faithful

throughout the world. Besides Catholics, Opus Dei has Cooperators who are Orthodox, Protestants or members of other Christian churches; Jews, Muslims, or followers of other religions; and people with no religion. One does not become a member of Opus Dei by becoming a Cooperator.

What kind of apostolate does Opus Dei do?

By apostolate it is understood the efforts Christians make to share their knowledge about God and to bring souls to Him. The chief apostolate of the Prelature's faithful is that which they carry out in their own milieu, not as a group endeavor, but as the natural and spontaneous expression of their Christian commitment. In addition, because of their desire to contribute to building a better world and to helping those most in need, Opus Dei members join with others

to organize educational and social projects (schools, hospitals, professional training centers, universities, etc.). These are all quite diverse, with the distinct personality of their respective countries and cultures.

Do women and men have the same status in Opus Dei?

Women and men share equal dignity as children of God and are equally called to live their faith fully. Men and women faithful of the Prelature follow the same spirit, promote similar apostolates, work in all honorable professions, and have the same vocation of endeavoring to sanctify work and family life. In addition, lay women and men discharge identical responsibilities of government and formation in the Prelature.

Does Opus Dei publish lists of members?

Opus Dei does not publish members' names but leaves it to them to tell people themselves, respecting their freedom. Friends, relatives and acquaintances will naturally know of it. Indeed, it would be impossible for Opus Dei to carry out its mission if members were not open about their involvement.

Does Opus Dei have its own political, economic or social teaching?

Opus Dei promotes only the teaching of the Catholic Church, and has no views of its own on politics, economics, or social matters. The Church's teachings leave room for different opinions on many issues, and like other Catholics, Opus Dei members are free to form their own views on these questions.

Do members of Opus Dei practice mortification?

Like other Catholics, members try to incorporate an element of sacrifice into their lives. In accord with its emphasis on finding God in everyday activities, Opus Dei encourages small sacrifices like carrying out one's duties conscientiously, putting others' needs before one's own, and finding a smile in annoying circumstances. The motivation for these voluntary penances is to imitate Christ and to join him in his redemptive sacrifice (cf. Matthew 16:24), and they can also be a way to suffer in solidarity with the many poor and deprived people in the world.

What is the relationship between Opus Dei and the local Church?

As part of the Catholic Church, Opus Dei works closely with the local Catholic bishop, whose consent is required before an Opus Dei center can be set up in his diocese, and who

is regularly informed of Opus Dei's activities there. The relationship of lay members of Opus Dei with their parish and their bishop is the same as that of other Catholics. Like other Catholics they are bound by diocesan regulations and follow the teachings and guidelines of the bishop, and participate fully in the life of the parish according to their circumstances. Their commitments to Opus Dei relate to areas, such as spiritual development and apostolic commitment, in which all members of the faithful are free to follow whichever path to holiness they choose.

What are the relations between Opus Dei and other Church institutions?

The Prelature of Opus Dei and each of its faithful strive to be in full communion with the Pope, the bishops, priests, religious and all

ecclesial entities. The founder of Opus Dei continually repeated that Opus Dei exists exclusively to serve the Church and that the Prelature's faithful have to be a leaven for unity.

What are some of the apostolates of Opus Dei in East Africa?

Opus Dei's first undertaking in East Africa was Strathmore College in Kenya, a multi-racial Sixth-Form College for men started in 1961. The College later split to become Strathmore School (1977 Secondary, 1987 Primary) and Strathmore University (2002).

Also in 1961 women of Opus Dei opened Kianda College in Kenya, offering secretarial training to women school leavers, and Kibondeni College, to train school leavers in institutional management. Kianda School was opened in 1977.

In Kenya there are youth clubs such as Faida and Hodari. Study centres and residences such as Keri, Satima, Riverside, Mbagathi and Fanusi in Kenya, and Teemba and Bugala in Uganda offer activities for the professional, cultural and spiritual training of university and college students.

A variety of courses for the general public, including retreats, are organized regularly in conference Centres such as Tigoni, Jahazi and Tusimba (Uganda). Besides, in Tigoni, Kimlea Girls Technical Training Centre offers courses for school leavers in agriculture, tailoring, machine-knitting, cookery, and Pearlcrest School of Hospitality and Management, in Uganda, trains women in tourism and hospitality.

There are also activities held in Mombasa, Eldoret, Kisumu, Nyeri and Nakuru. And in Dar-es-Salaam

and Kigali. Trips to these places are organized with different regularity.

For more information contact: Opus Dei Information Office, P.O.Box 49569, 00100 GPO Nairobi, Tel: 7121004 e-mail: info@opusdei.or.ke

The Prelature publishes an official bulletin, Romana which contains all relevant documents and news about its activities, For more information see www.romana.org

For more information about St. Josemaria see www.josemariaescriva.info. For information about his writings see www.escrivaworks.org

In countries where Opus Dei has Centres, there is an Information Office which journalists can contact. The addresses of these offices can be found in the Press Room section of www.opusdei.org.ke

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