

# **Some Actions and Initiatives Since the 2017 Ordinary General Congress**

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### **Letters from the Prelate, texts on Christian life, and guides for government and formation**

Over the course of the years, in line with points 7–12 of the 2017 letter, the Prelate has written several pastoral letters offering deeper reflection on key aspects of the spirit of Opus Dei, enlightened by the

teachings of Saint Josemaría. These seven letters have focused on freedom, friendship, vocation, fidelity, fraternity, obedience, and, most recently, joy. The website of the Work has published texts for prayer and for formation as aids to personal reflection, including a series on the charism, still ongoing, entitled, “Path to the Centenary.”

The same themes have shaped the priorities of this period, with a renewed approach to formation, spiritual accompaniment, and the family and apostolic life of centres; one that highlights personal freedom and initiative in the response to their own vocation. The revision of practical guidelines for regional governments and for formation work in the centres has incorporated these topics, making it easier to reflect them in the tone and style of different activities.

# Publication of previously unpublished works of Saint Josemaría

Over the past eight years, the Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá has made significant progress in publishing critical editions of several of Saint Josemaría's works: the first eight letters (previously unpublished), *Friends of God*, *Escritos varios* [Various Writings], and *In Dialogue with the Lord* (cf. Letter, February 14, 2017, no. 29). The series of monographs and source texts has grown by nine volumes, including noteworthy additions on the history of Opus Dei and of women in the Work. The website escriva.org, which offers Saint Josemaría's writings in 28 languages, has also been updated.

## A few key themes

A wide range of formation initiatives have been carried out in response to

the challenges outlined by the Prelate (cf. Letter, February 14, 2017, no. 8). Below are some of the core themes that have been explored through theology classes, practical materials, expert-led sessions, and spiritual accompaniment:

- Deepening the life of prayer;
- Developing a contemplative outlook through human, cultural and artistic formation, and growth in virtues such as temperance, attentiveness, and reflection;
- A deeper understanding of the vocation to Opus Dei and the specific identity of each form of commitment;
- Providing formation that encompasses every dimension of the person, with particular emphasis on affective maturity and including the physical dimension;

- Cultivating a free and detached heart, capable of loving;
- Deepening the understanding of work as a place of encounter with God;
- Fostering a sense of social responsibility.

In this last area, special mention can be made of content related to professional formation and the social doctrine of the Church. One noteworthy example is BeDoCare, a forum for social initiatives from various countries, many inspired by the teachings of Saint Josemaría, launched in the context of preparations for the centenary of Opus Dei.

Regarding means of formation, work has been done to review the approach, language, and way of explaining and grounding different aspects of the spirit of Opus Dei across the various stages of

formation (initial formation, centres of study, courses of study), as well as in materials for study circles, recollections, and spiritual retreats.

## **Initiatives driven directly by the Central Advisory and General Council**

Below is a brief overview of several initiatives promoted by the Central Advisory and the General Council, aimed at improving the governance of the Prelature (cf. Letter, February 14, 2017, nos. 13 and 15):

Strengthening the project for improved governance and spurring forward apostolic undertakings, launched in 2021 and developed in various ways. One major aspect has been the territorial restructuring of the Prelature's circumscriptions, together with improved formation for those leading the advisory teams that assist the vicars in each circumscription. The work of these

bodies has also been enhanced through a review of processes, in order to simplify them; digital transformation, with many now operating remotely with decentralized teams; and, finally, considerable effort to ensure compliance with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Measures to improve vocational discernment and introduce more flexible timelines for incorporation into the Work, tailored to the great diversity of personal circumstances.

Ongoing, specialised formation to improve spiritual accompaniment, the direction of apostolic initiatives, and care for people in a variety of situations (including the elderly and the sick, those facing psychological difficulties, support for families and parents, marital or family crises, etc.).

Updates to universal guidelines and local protocols to create environments of trust and to protect minors and vulnerable adults in activities of the Prelature. This includes the launch or updating of safeguarding policies in all apostolic initiatives, along with related training.

Renewed reflection and focus on accompaniment and the involvement of former members of the Work who wish to stay connected with formation or projects linked to the Prelature.

Creation of a protocol for institutional complaints, implemented in all circumscriptions through listening, healing and resolution offices set up in several regions, to address concerns raised by individuals.

**Examples of holiness and testimonies of Christian life**

During this period, we gave thanks to God for the beatification of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri (May 2019). Other causes for joy include the declaration of Ernesto Cofiño as venerable, and the completion of the diocesan processes for three other faithful of Opus Dei whose causes for beatification are now open: Arturo Álvarez, a Mexican associate; Marcelo Câmara, a Brazilian supernumerary; and Adolfo Rodríguez Vidal, a numerary priest who died in Chile. In 2024, the Diocese of Salford (United Kingdom) started investigating the case of Pedro Ballester, a young numerary.

To present “attractive examples of Christian life” and help young people in their spiritual journey (cf. Letter, 14 Feb. 2017, n. 18), efforts have been made to develop content for the Prelature’s official website that makes Christian life more accessible and appealing. One significant

project was the 2024 launch of Youth, a digital platform created for young people, designed to address their questions, challenges, and dreams.

## **Formation for family life**

Over these eight years, there has been a strong push to renew formation programmes for family life, led especially by married members. These include congresses, digital content platforms, new case studies for discussion, international gatherings, and research projects. A key milestone was the 2022 working session in Barcelona, which was a time of listening and reflection on family life around the world. The concluding document, “Faith, Family, Formation, Future,” helped to define eight priority areas for ongoing work.

## **Other lines of action**

Many other lines of action outlined in the 2017 letter – such as those on apostolic challenges, professional environments, family life, youth, and social needs (cf. nos. 16–31) – have been carried forward at the regional or local level, or taken up by apostolic initiatives. At the heart of all these efforts is each person in the Work, called to “care for our union with God with the refinement of people in love, beginning with the contemplation of Jesus Christ, the face of the Father’s Mercy” (Letter, February 14, 2017, n. 30), to “feel the weight of the Work, the weight of souls, the responsibility of taking forward this small family that we are” (no. 1), and to “redeem and sanctify our time, to understand and share the concerns of our fellow men and women” (no. 1).

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