

# History

The first arrivals were two: a layman, Jeremy White from U.K. and a priest, Fr. Jose Domingo Gabiola, from Spain. The founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, had sent them to open this path of holiness in daily life among Nigerians.

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Jeremy White arrived in Nigeria on the 19th of October 1965 with a commonwealth scholarship to do a post-graduate degree in the University of Ibadan. After getting a

doctoral degree he taught in the University of Lagos, bearing witness to his strong faith and leading many of his colleagues and students to an encounter with God. He was a man of outstanding human virtues and of great faith and apostolic zeal. He also helped to establish the first apostolic works of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Nigeria. Twenty five years later he died in Lagos with a reputation of being a holy person: many have recourse to his intercession and obtain favours and graces from God.

With him came Fr Joseph Domingo Gabiola who was the first regional vicar of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Nigeria (1965-1971). Other members came from abroad in successive years, joining these first two, some as university lecturers others as workers in the private sector and soon the spirit and message of Opus Dei caught up with Nigerians.

The early years (1965-1975) were naturally fraught with many challenges; Nigeria was then in the throes of repeated military coups and a civil war. With the coming of peace however the apostolate gradually took roots and grew, first among students and lecturers, and later spread to other strata of society.

Today Opus Dei has spread among all sorts of people both men and women, single and married. There are about 30 centres in various cities and towns like Lagos, Ibadan and Iloti in the West; Enugu, Iwollo and Nsukka in the East. Plans are under way to start in the North with regular apostolic trips to Abuja being undertaken. There are close to one thousand members and many thousands more are in contact with the formative activities of Opus Dei across the country.

The majority of the faithful of Opus Dei, in Nigeria, as elsewhere, are married, but there are many who embrace a single life of apostolic celibacy, without for this reason ceasing to be fully lay men or women; they all (whether married or single) carry out their professional work, be it prestigious or modest, on their own or, employed by others, often hidden and unknown. It is right in the middle of the world, in their daily situations of work and family, where they endeavour to be like leaven in the mass, reflecting the light of Christ's teachings in a natural way, mostly by the example of their work, conduct and friendship.

During these four decades of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Nigeria, several university graduates, from the ranks of Opus Dei's faithful have been called to the priesthood by the Bishop-Prelate of Opus Dei and are thus incardinated in the Prelature.

As in other parts of the world they help with their priestly ministry the spiritual life of members and contribute to their apostolic zeal and doctrinal formation.

In Nigeria, as elsewhere, a number of projects have developed, under the initiative of some of the lay members along with other citizens, in the fields of education, health care and social work, contributing in this way their quota to the development of Nigerians, especially with respect to professional skills, competence, ideals and values.

The Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei asks everyone for prayers in the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to it by the Church: the spreading of the universal call to holiness in daily life by people whose vocation is to live in the world, sanctifying it from within with the spirit of the Gospel.

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