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# Statutes of Opus Dei

The Statutes of Opus Dei were promulgated by Pope St John Paul II in 1982. Written in Latin, they define precisely the juridical configuration of the Prelature, its organization, and its aims.

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*Below is an unofficial English translation of the official Latin text revised by Fr Paul Hayward.*

# **Code of the Particular Law or Statutes approved by the Apostolic See**

## **for the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei**

### **Title 1**

#### **The Nature of the Prelature and its Faithful**

##### **Chapter 1**

###### **The Nature and Mission of the Prelature**

1. § 1. Opus Dei is a personal Prelature consisting of both clerics and lay persons for the carrying out of a specific pastoral task under the governance of its own Prelate (cf. n. 125).

1. § 2. The presbyterate of the Prelature consists of those clerics who have been promoted to Orders from among the lay faithful of the Prelature and are incardinated in it; the laity of the Prelature is formed of those faithful who, moved by a divine vocation, are bound in a special way to the Prelature by means of a juridical bond of incorporation.

1. § 3. The Prelature which is called “of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei” or, more briefly, “Opus Dei”, is of international scope, has its headquarters in Rome, and is governed by the norms of universal law for personal Prelatures and by these Statutes, and in accordance with any special provisions or indults of the Holy See.

2. § 1. In conformity with its particular law, the Prelature undertakes the sanctification of its

own faithful through the exercise of the Christian virtues by each of the faithful in their own particular state, profession, and place in society, and in accordance with its specific spirituality, which is wholly secular.

2. § 2. The Prelature also strives to work with all its strength so that persons of all backgrounds and states in civil society, and especially those who are called intellectuals, adhere wholeheartedly to the precepts of Christ the Lord; and put them into practice in the middle of the world through the sanctification of their own professional work, so that all things may be ordered according to the Will of the Creator. The Prelature also strives to form men and women for an apostolate which is likewise carried out in civil society.

3. § 1. The means which the faithful of the Prelature employ in order to

attain these supernatural ends are the following:

1°. an intense spiritual life of prayer and sacrifice, in accordance with the spirit of Opus Dei; for their vocation is essentially contemplative, based on a humble and sincere sense of divine filiation, and constantly sustained by a smiling asceticism;

2°. a deep and continual ascetical and doctrinal-religious instruction adapted to the personal circumstances of each individual and firmly based on the Magisterium of the Church, together with a constant effort to acquire and perfect the necessary professional formation and personal cultural development;

3°. the imitation of the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Nazareth, which includes the sanctification of their own ordinary professional work. By word and example they seek to convert their work into an

instrument of apostolate, each within their sphere of action, as the education and aptitude of each require, conscious that they ought to be like yeast hidden in the dough of human society. The faithful should sanctify themselves in the perfect fulfilment of their work, carried out in constant union with God, and by that work they should also sanctify others.

3. § 2. For these reasons all the faithful of the Prelature:

1°. commit themselves not to abandon the exercise of their professional work, or its equivalent, because it is precisely by means of it that they pursue their sanctification and their specific apostolate;

2°. strive with the greatest faithfulness possible to carry out the duties of their own state in life and their own social activity or profession, always fully respecting

legitimate civil laws; likewise to carry out the apostolic tasks entrusted to them by the Prelate.

4. § 1. Under the Prelate's governance, the presbyterate cultivates and informs all of Opus Dei by its priestly ministry.

4. § 2. The ministerial priesthood of the clerics and the common priesthood of the lay faithful are intimately interconnected. They need and complement one another for the attainment, in unity of vocation and government, of the aim which the Prelature sets itself.

4. § 3. Equally, in both Sections of Opus Dei, namely those of the men and the women, there is the same unity of vocation, spirit, aim, and governance, even though each Section has its own apostolates.

5. The Prelature has as Patrons Blessed Mary ever-Virgin, who is

venerated as Mother, and St Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its faithful also foster special devotion to the Holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael and the Holy Apostles, Peter, Paul and John. To these Opus Dei as a whole, as well as each of its particular types of activity, are consecrated.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Faithful of the Prelature**

6. All the faithful who are incorporated into the Prelature by the juridical bond described in n. 27 are moved to do so by the same divine vocation. All pursue the same apostolic mission and live out the same spirit and ascetical practices. They receive a suitable doctrinal instruction and priestly care. In all that pertains to the mission of the Prelature they are subject to the authority of the Prelate and his

Councils, in accordance with the norms of universal law and these Statutes.

7. § 1. Without forming different classes, the faithful of the Prelature, both men and women, are referred to as Numeraries, Associates, or Supernumeraries according to their habitual availability to take on tasks of formation and some specific apostolic initiatives of Opus Dei. This availability depends on the different permanent circumstances – personal, family, professional, or of some other type – of each individual.

7. § 2. Without becoming faithful of the Prelature, the Cooperators who are mentioned in n. 16 may be associated with Opus Dei.

8. § 1. Numeraries are those clerics and lay persons who, by a special motion and gift of God, observe apostolic celibacy (cf. Mt 19:11) and devote themselves to the particular

apostolic initiatives of the Prelature, with all their strength and with full personal availability to work in them. Ordinarily, they live in the Centres of Opus Dei in order to take care of those apostolic initiatives and to dedicate themselves to the formation of the other faithful of the Prelature.

8. § 2. Women Numeraries, in addition, look after the family administration or domestic care of all the Centres of the Prelature, although they live in a completely separate area.

9. All those lay faithful who enjoy full availability to dedicate themselves to the duties of formation and the particular apostolic works of Opus Dei may be admitted as Numeraries. Ordinarily, when they request admission they will have obtained a university degree or professional equivalent, or at least can obtain one

after the admission. In addition, in the women's Section there are Assistant Numeraries, who have the same complete availability as the other Numeraries, and who dedicate their lives principally to manual work or domestic tasks in the Centres of Opus Dei, which they willingly undertake as their professional work.

10. § 1. Associates are those lay faithful who give their lives fully to the Lord in apostolic celibacy and in accordance with the spirit of Opus Dei but who have to devote themselves to concrete and permanent personal, family or professional obligations which usually lead them to live with their own families. All these obligations taken together determine the degree of their dedication to tasks of apostolate and formation of Opus Dei.

10. § 2. Except where something else is specifically indicated for them, Associates take on the same duties or obligations as Numeraries and should use the same ascetical means to reach holiness and carry out apostolate.

11. § 1. Supernumeraries are those lay faithful – single as well as married – who have the same divine vocation as the Numeraries and Associates and fully participate in the particular apostolates of Opus Dei. They share in the apostolic undertakings, however, with the degree of availability which is compatible with the fulfilment of their family, professional and social responsibilities. They convert into a means of sanctity and apostolate not only their life and profession, like all the other faithful of the Prelature, but also, like the Associates, their own home and their family affairs.

11. § 2. Supernumeraries live according to the same spirit as the Numeraries and Associates and, to the extent possible for them, the same customs.

12. Persons suffering from a chronic illness may be received as Associates and Supernumeraries.

13. Numeraries specially dedicated to tasks of governance or formation should live in the Centres which are established for that end.

14. § 1. Those who have written a letter requesting admission to Opus Dei as a Numerary or Associate, and have been informed via the competent director that their request has been found worthy of consideration, are *ipso facto* admitted as Supernumeraries and remain as such until the admission they requested is granted.

14. § 2. If before a person's incorporation as a Numerary or Associate it appears that they are unsuited for this, they can remain in Opus Dei as a Supernumerary, provided that they have the requisite qualities.

15. Supernumeraries can be received as Numeraries or Associates, provided they possess the requisite qualities.

16. § 1. Cooperators, by their assiduous prayers to God, by their alms, and as far as possible by their own work, collaborate in the apostolic works and share in the spiritual benefits of Opus Dei.

16. § 2. There are also those who in one way or another are far from their Father's house or who do not profess the true Catholic faith, but who, nevertheless, lend help to Opus Dei by their own work or by alms. By right and by merit, these also can be

called Cooperators. All the faithful of the Prelature, by their prayer, sacrifice, and dealings, ought to work with these Cooperators in such a way that, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the unfailing light of faith may be obtained for them from the divine mercy, and they may be drawn gently and effectively to Christian ways.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Admission and Incorporation of the Faithful into the Prelature**

17. Joining has three steps: simple Admission, which is done by the Regional Vicar after consulting his Commission; temporary incorporation, which is called the Oblation, at least one year after the Admission; and the definitive incorporation or Fidelity which is

done at least five years after the temporary incorporation.

18. With the permission of the local Director, any lay Catholic can ask for Admission, if, as well as possessing the age and the other requisite qualities mentioned in n. 20, they have an upright intention and are moved by a divine vocation to pursue earnestly their own sanctification through their work or profession and without changing their canonical state. They must also want to dedicate themselves to carry out with all their strength apostolate according to the aims and means proper to Opus Dei. They must be suited to bearing its demands and carrying out its particular works.

19. They are to request Admission by means of a letter written to the competent Ordinary of the Prelature, in which they make clear their desire

to belong to Opus Dei as a Numerary, Associate or Supernumerary.

20. § 1. For someone to be admitted to the Prelature, it is required:

1°. that they be at least seventeen years of age;

2°. that they dedicate themselves to personal sanctity and earnestly cultivate the Christian virtues in accordance with the spirit and ascetical practice which are proper to Opus Dei;

3°. that they look after their spiritual life by the frequent reception of the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Penance and by the daily exercise of mental prayer and the other norms of piety of Opus Dei;

4°. that they have carried out the particular apostolate of Opus Dei under the direction of the competent authority for at least half a year; it is

allowable, however, for the person concerned to have spent some time previously as a candidate, without yet belonging to the Prelature;

5°. that they be endowed with the other personal qualities which would show that they have received a vocation to Opus Dei.

20. § 2. No one may belong to Opus Dei who has been a member, novice, or postulant of a religious Institute or Society of common life or a student of an apostolic school; nor may anyone who has spent time in a secular Institute as a candidate or sought admission in it.

20. § 3. Moreover, in order not to deprive dioceses of their own priestly vocations, neither Seminary students (lay or clerics) nor priests incardinated in a diocese are admitted to the Prelature.

21. From the moment they request admission and are informed that their petition has been found worthy of consideration, the persons concerned have the right, in accordance with n. 14 § 1, to receive the appropriate means of formation and the ministerial care of priests of the Prelature.

22. Before being admitted, those concerned must be instructed that the spirit of Opus Dei demands that each person lead a life of intense work, and that by the exercise of their own profession or activity they procure financial means: not just what is necessary for their own needs and (should it be required) those of their family, but also in order to contribute generously, in accordance with their personal circumstances, to the support of the apostolic works.

23. As well as the free and explicit will of the person concerned, incorporation, both temporary and definitive, requires the opportune concession of the Regional Vicar with the deliberative vote of his Council; in the case of the definitive incorporation, confirmation by the Prelate is also required.

24. § 1. All faithful of the Prelature should acquire the necessary insurance or securities which the civil laws provide for cases of unemployment or inability to work, sickness, old age, etc.

24. § 2. Whenever necessary in view of the circumstances, the Prelature has the duty of providing for the material needs of the Numeraries and Associates.

24. § 3. The Prelature, out of generosity and charity, provides for the needy parents of the faithful mentioned in the preceding

paragraph, without any juridical obligation ever arising from this.

25. The temporary incorporation is renewed each year individually by each of the faithful. For this renewal the permission of the Regional Vicar is required and sufficient, and in the case of doubt, he can consult his Commission as well as the local Director with his Council. If there is no reason to think that the Vicar is opposed to the renewal, and there is no opposition on the part of the Director, the permission is presumed and the temporary incorporation may be renewed. It is also assumed that the renewal has been made tacitly if the faithful concerned did not previously manifest any intention to the contrary. However, the renewal is rendered invalid if the Vicar, on being informed of it, with the agreement of the *Defensor* and after consulting his Commission, opposes it.

26. Supernumeraries who become Associates or Numeraries can be dispensed from all or some of the time required for the new temporary or definitive incorporation, but in no way are they dispensed from the special formation.

27. § 1. For the temporary or definitive incorporation of any of the faithful, a formal declaration is to be made before two witnesses by the Prelature and the person concerned, about their mutual duties and rights.

27. § 2. In this case the Prelature is represented by the person whom the Vicar of the respective circumscription has designated. From the moment of the faithful's incorporation and for as long as it lasts, the Prelature obliges itself:

1°. to give that faithful continual doctrinal-religious, spiritual, ascetical and apostolic formation, as

well as the specific pastoral care of the priests of the Prelature;

2°. to fulfil the other obligations towards its faithful that are established in the norms regulating the Prelature.

27. § 3. The faithful will manifest a firm resolution to devote themselves with all their strength to pursue holiness and to carry out apostolate according to the spirit and practice of Opus Dei. From the moment of their incorporation and as long as it lasts, they bind themselves:

1°. to remain under the jurisdiction of the Prelate and other competent authorities of the Prelature, in order faithfully to commit themselves to all that pertains to the particular end of the Prelature;

2°. to fulfil all the duties which the condition of being a Numerary or Associate or Supernumerary of Opus

Dei brings with it, and to observe the norms regulating the Prelature and the legitimate provisions of the Prelate and of the other competent authorities of the Prelature regarding its governance, spirit and apostolate.

27. § 4. With respect to the faithful of the Prelature, the Ordinary of the Prelature can, for a just cause, dispense from private vows and promissory oaths, so long as the dispensation does not injure a right of a third party. Also, with respect to those faithful, he can suspend membership in a third order, in such a way, however, that the membership is revived if for any reason the bond with the Prelature ceases.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Departure and Dismissal of the Faithful from the Prelature**

28. § 1. Before someone is temporarily incorporated into the Prelature, they can freely leave it at any time.

28. § 2. Likewise, the competent authority, for just and reasonable causes, has the authority not to admit a person, or to advise them to leave. These reasons are especially the lack of the spirit proper to Opus Dei and the lack of an aptitude for the particular apostolate of the faithful of the Prelature.

29. For someone to leave the Prelature voluntarily during the temporary incorporation or after the definitive incorporation, a dispensation is required which the

Prelate alone can grant, after consulting his own Council and the Regional Commission.

30. § 1. The faithful who are temporarily or definitively incorporated into the Prelature cannot be dismissed except for serious causes, which in the case of the definitive incorporation must always be due to the fault of the faithful in question.

30. § 2. Ill health is not a reason for dismissal unless it is established with certainty that it was deceitfully concealed or misrepresented before the temporary incorporation.

31. Dismissal, if necessary, should be carried out with the greatest charity. Before this, however, the person concerned should be persuaded to leave voluntarily.

32. Dismissal by the Prelate, or within his own territory by the Vicar,

must always be decided with the deliberative vote of his own Council, after the causes of the dismissal have been made known to the person concerned, and that person has been given full opportunity to respond. The dismissal must follow two unheeded warnings, and the right of the faithful to have recourse to the Prelate or the Holy See must always be preserved. If such a recourse is made within ten days, the juridical effect of the dismissal is suspended until a response is forthcoming from the Prelate, or from the Holy See if that is the case.

33. Legitimate departure from Opus Dei brings with it the cessation of the bond described in n. 27 and of the duties and rights which flow from it.

34. A person who for whatever reason leaves the Prelature or is dismissed from it can demand nothing from the Prelature for

services rendered to it, nor for anything they might have given to it, through their activity or the exercise of their profession, or under any other title or in any other manner.

35. A cleric incardinated in the Prelature according to the provision of n. 36 may not leave the Prelature until he finds a Bishop who will receive him into his diocese. If he leaves without finding a Bishop, he is unable to exercise his orders in the meantime, unless the Holy See provides otherwise.

## **Title 2**

# **The Prelature's Presbyterate and the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross**

## **Chapter 1**

# **The Composition of the Presbyterate and of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross**

36. § 1. The presbyterate of the Prelature is made up of those clerics who are promoted to holy Orders by the Prelate in accordance with nn. 44-51. They are incardinated in the Prelature and are dedicated to its service.

36. § 2. By the very fact of their ordination, these priests become Numerary members or, in accordance with what is said below

(n. 37 § 2), Coadjutors of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, a clerical Association which is proper and intrinsic to the Prelature, such that it constitutes one thing with it and cannot be separated from it.

36. § 3. The Prelate of Opus Dei is the President General of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

37. § 1. To be capable of receiving sacred Orders in the service of the Prelature, a person must be incorporated in it definitively as a Numerary or Associate and must have completed the period of formation which all lay Numeraries and those Associates who are destined for the priesthood are obliged to complete. Thus no one is permitted to be incardinated immediately into the Prelature as a Numerary or Associate priest of Opus Dei.

37. § 2. In order that they might be suitably distinguished in law from the Associate members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross (who are described in nn. 58 and following), the lay Associates of Opus Dei who receive the priesthood in the service of the Prelature are called, within the Priestly Society, Coadjutors or simply Associate priests of Opus Dei.

38. These priests dedicate their activity above all to the spiritual and ecclesiastical formation and the particular care of the souls of the faithful of both Sections of Opus Dei.

39. With regard to other faithful, the priests of Opus Dei exercise the proper ministries of the priestly Order only after receiving the ministerial faculties required by law.

40. If by reason of their ecclesiastical office or their personal qualifications these priests are invited to join the Council of Priests or other diocesan

bodies, they should participate to the extent they can, obtaining beforehand, however, permission from the Prelate of Opus Dei or his Vicar.

41. In all the dioceses in which they exercise their ministry, these priests are linked by bonds of apostolic charity with the other priests of the presbyterate of each diocese.

42. As well as the clerics mentioned in nn. 36 and 37, others may also join the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross as Associates and Supernumeraries, in accordance with n. 58.

Nevertheless, they cannot be counted among the clerics of the Prelature, since each one continues to belong to his diocesan presbyterate, under the jurisdiction of his respective Bishop alone.

43. Also other clerics incardinated in a diocese can be counted as Cooperators associated with the

Priestly Society of the Holy Cross; they provide assistance to the Society by their prayer, alms and, if possible, their own priestly ministry.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Promotion to Holy Orders and the Canonical Mission of the Priests**

44. Only those Numeraries and Associates of Opus Dei are to receive holy Orders whom the Prelate knows to be endowed with a vocation to the ministerial priesthood and whom he judges to be necessary or suitable for Opus Dei and its ministries. Those who desire to seek holy Orders may make their desire known to the Prelate, but they should accept his decision.

45. For any Numerary or Associate to be promoted to holy Orders, he must be free of the irregularities and other

impediments set out in universal law. Moreover, as well as what is prescribed in n. 37, it is required that he possess a special aptitude for the priestly duties as they are to be exercised in the Prelature and that he be at least twenty-five years of age before he receives the priesthood.

46. With regard to the formation of the candidates to the priesthood, the norms of universal law and of the proper law of the Prelature are to be carefully observed.

47. Enrolment as a candidate by the liturgical rite of admission, the conferral of ministries, and promotion to holy Orders, are reserved to the Prelate. These follow upon the prior declaration of each candidate, written in his own hand and signed, whereby he testifies that he is receiving holy Orders freely and of his own volition, and that he will bind himself perpetually to the

ecclesiastical ministry; at the same time he requests that he be admitted to receive that Order.

48. The Prelate of Opus Dei gives the dimissorial letters for ordination, and can dispense those to be promoted from the normal interstices and from the lack of the minimum age required in these Statutes, but not by more than one year.

49. Those who are called to holy Orders should not only possess the requisites called for by Canon Law, especially the particular knowledge of ecclesiastical disciplines, but should also be outstanding in their piety, integrity of life, zeal for souls, fervent love for the sacred Eucharist, and the desire of imitating what each day they touch with their hands.

50. § 1. When they receive holy Orders, clerics remain at the disposition of the Prelate for their

first and subsequent assignments to one or other of the circumscriptions of Opus Dei.

50. § 2. The Prelate confers the canonical mission on the priests, either personally or through the respective Vicars of the circumscriptions, always in accordance with the norms established by the Prelate, granting them the appropriate ministerial faculties for celebrating the holy sacrifice of the Mass, preaching the Word of God, and hearing confessions.

50. § 3. This faculty of hearing confessions, which the Ordinary of the Prelature can grant to any priest, extends to all the faithful of the Prelature and all the members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross according to the terms of the concession itself; it extends also to all who reside in Centres of Opus Dei.

51. § 1. Priests of the presbyterate of the Prelature may not accept any ecclesiastical tasks or offices, even if they are compatible with their own condition and their pastoral task in the Prelature, without the express permission of the Prelate of Opus Dei.

51. § 2. Nevertheless, they are not prohibited from carrying out professional activity which, in accordance with the law and the prescriptions and instructions of the Holy See, does not conflict with their priestly condition.

52. In imminent danger of death, it is the right and duty of the priests of the Prelature to administer the sacraments to sick Numeraries; they can do the same with Associates and all who live in Centres of Opus Dei. When the moment of death arrives, the commendation of the soul should be made, insofar as it is possible,

with all the persons assigned to the Centre present; they pray that God may comfort the sick person, meet that person with joy, and lead them into Paradise.

53. Appropriate funerals for Numeraries, Associates and Supernumeraries should normally be held in a parish in accordance with the law. As an exception, they may be held in a Centre, at least if the Centre has a church attached to it or it is a large Centre.

54. After their ordination, priests periodically attend theoretical and practical courses on pastoral matters, discussions, conferences, and other such activities. They must take the prescribed post-ordination examinations and the examinations for the renewal of their ministerial faculties in accordance with the norms determined by the Prelate.

55. It is the duty of the Prelate, through opportune norms, to provide for the decent support of the clerics who receive holy Orders for the service of the Prelature, as well as to provide for their appropriate care in the case of sickness, disability, and old age.

56. The Prelate and his Vicars strive to foster in all the priests of the Prelature a fervent spirit of communion with the other priests of the local Churches in which they exercise their ministry.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Associate and Supernumerary Members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross**

57. The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, mentioned in n. 36, is constituted as an Association so that

clerics, including those not belonging to the Prelature, may better pursue their goal of priestly holiness according to the spirit and ascetical practice of Opus Dei.

58. § 1. Associate and Supernumerary members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross do not indeed become members of the clergy of the Prelature, but belong to their own presbyterate. They are priests or at least deacons incardinated in a diocese, who, through a particular superadded vocation, want to devote themselves to the Lord in the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross according to the spirit of Opus Dei, in order to seek sanctity with all their strength in the exercise of their ministry. Their full diocesan condition, however, and their subjection to their own proper Ordinary, are not affected in any way by this dedication, but are rather

confirmed in various respects, as will be said below.

58. § 2. In the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, there are no internal superiors for Associates and Supernumeraries. Hence they are to obey only their own local Ordinary in accordance with the law, and there arises absolutely no question of double obedience; for there is no internal obedience, but only the normal discipline to be found in any Society, which results from the obligation to observe and fulfil its dispositions. In this case, such dispositions refer exclusively to the spiritual life.

59. § 1. Those who wish to be admitted should be outstanding in love for the diocese, obedience and veneration for their Bishop, piety, sound formation in the sacred sciences, zeal for souls, spirit of sacrifice, eagerness to promote

vocations, and the desire to fulfil their ministerial duties with maximum perfection.

59. § 2. For incorporation into the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, there is no upper age limit, and clerics suffering from some chronic infirmity may be admitted.

60. § 1. Seminary students who are not yet deacons may not be received into the Society. If they sense a vocation before they are ordained, they can be considered Candidates and be admitted as such.

60. § 2. Also excluded by law from the Society is anyone who was a member, novice or postulant of a religious institute or Society of common life or a student in an apostolic school; so too anyone who spent time as a candidate or sought admission in a secular Institute.

61. For someone to be admitted as an Associate, a divine vocation is required that brings with it a total and habitual availability for seeking holiness according to the spirit of Opus Dei. This spirit demands:

1°. first of all, an eagerness to fulfil perfectly the pastoral task entrusted to him by his own Bishop, knowing that he is accountable only to the local Ordinary regarding the fulfilment of that task;

2°. the intention of devoting all his time and all his effort to apostolate, especially by assisting his brother diocesan priests spiritually.

62. For someone to join as a Supernumerary, the same divine vocation is required as for an Associate, as well as a total availability to seek holiness according to the spirit of Opus Dei. Supernumeraries, however, because of their habitual personal or family

situation or similar condition, are not usually able to devote themselves totally and immediately to apostolic activity.

63. Admission is sought by a letter written to the President General, in which the candidate manifests his desire of joining the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross as an Associate or Supernumerary member.

64. For the admission and incorporation of clerics as Associate or Supernumerary members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, the same norms and plan of activity are to be followed as are prescribed for the admission and incorporation of Associates and Supernumeraries of Opus Dei. The same applies to the period of specific spiritual formation and the means offered to candidates in order to nourish their spiritual life.

65. Those who request admission as Supernumeraries may later be received as Associates, so long as they possess the requisite qualities.

66. If before his incorporation as an Associate someone is seen to lack the necessary availability, he can be retained as a Supernumerary, so long as he has the requisite conditions.

67. With respect to departure and dismissal, the same things hold and are to be observed, *congrua congruis referendo*, as are established for the departure and dismissal of Associates and Supernumeraries of Opus Dei.

68. In addition to the aim of Opus Dei, which these members make their own within their circumstances, they claim the following aim as specifically theirs: the energetic promotion of priestly sanctity and a sense of full dedication and submission to the

ecclesiastical Hierarchy; and the encouragement of life in common among the priests of the diocesan clergy, to the extent deemed suitable by the local Ordinary.

69. The spirit which should inform the Associates and Supernumeraries of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in all things is contained above all in the following principles:

1°. to do nothing without the Bishop, and this ought to embrace all their priestly life and service to souls;

2°. never to neglect their own diocesan ministry, but on the contrary, to exercise it with ever greater love of God;

3°. to behave always and everywhere with the greatest naturalness among their brother priests, without in any way appearing secretive, since they have nothing to hide;

4°. to desire not to be distinguished in any way from their brother priests, but to strive with all their strength to be united with them;

5°. to be so full of fraternal charity towards the other members of their own presbyterate that they avoid even the least shadow of division, are joined by special bonds of apostolic charity and fraternity, and foster the very greatest unity among all the priests.

70. As well as the obligations for clerics established in universal law and other obligations which individual Bishops might prescribe for all their priests, Associates and Supernumeraries of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross observe the duties of piety proper to the ascetical practice of Opus Dei. They should however do their spiritual retreat with the other priests of their

diocese, in the place and manner determined by their own Ordinary.

71. Associate and Supernumerary priests dedicate themselves especially to cultivating the Christian virtues, both theological and cardinal, each one in his own work and in the pastoral task entrusted to him by his Bishop.

72. The spirit of Opus Dei fosters in the Associates and Supernumeraries of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross the need to accept enthusiastically and put into practice the collective spiritual direction which the diocesan Bishop imparts to his priests by means of pastoral letters, discourses, disciplinary provisions and other means. To this end, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross provides the Associates and Supernumeraries with specific means of formation, without interfering at all with the diocesan

indications or the times prescribed for implementing them. Among these are the following:

1°. regular meetings where personal spiritual direction is received, and Study Circles led by Coordinators who foster the spirit of the members. With respect to their duration, absences from the diocese on feast days, and other such matters, these activities ought to be so arranged that all the priests attending them can first of all attend to the tasks entrusted to them in their diocese;

2°. all the other means, practical techniques, ascetical instruments and pious practices of Opus Dei;

3°. the perfection and, to the extent considered opportune in the presence of the Lord, the deepening and broadening of their human culture and academic formation, insofar as these are a means to exercise their ministry.

73. § 1. With respect to Associates and Supernumeraries, it is absolutely necessary to take care within the diocese to avoid even the least shadow of a special hierarchy proper to the Society. The only thing sought ought to be this: the perfection of one's priestly life, which springs from a diligent fidelity to one's interior life, from a tenacious and constant zeal for formation, and from a well-ordered and eager apostolic mentality; and all this without these clerics being in any way under the power of governance of Opus Dei's Prelate or his vicars.

73. § 2. In order to assist the Associates and Supernumeraries of the Region, the Regional Vicar uses the ministry of the Priest Prefect for Spiritual Matters, with whom in each diocese an *Admonitor* and spiritual Director, with their own substitutes, collaborate.

74. For everything concerning the Associates or Supernumeraries in their own diocese which should be dealt with or arranged with the Bishop or local Ordinary, the Society normally uses the *Admonitor* or his substitute, unless the Regional Vicar prefers to carry out or arrange some matter himself, either personally or through his special delegate.

75. § 1. The Regional Vicar designates priests as *Admonitores*, Spiritual Directors, and their substitutes for a term of five years.

75. § 2. These tasks ought absolutely to avoid any form or appearance of the power of governance.

75. § 3. Having made these appointments, the Regional Vicar will communicate them as soon as possible and in an opportune way to the diocesan Bishop or local Ordinary.

76. Associate and Supernumerary priests of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross are placed together in groups which are attached to special personal Centres. One and the same Centre may have attached to it several such groups, even distributed across several dioceses if that seems more advantageous.

77. The Society should have no separate economic activity. If any is needed, it uses the ordinary administration of the faithful of Opus Dei.

78. In those things that are not here explicitly prescribed, and as long as they are suitable to the priestly state, everything laid down for the Associates and Supernumeraries of Opus Dei applies, *congrua congruis referendo*, to Associate and Supernumerary priests; and the priests share in their spiritual goods and resources.

## **Title 3**

# **The Life, Formation and Apostolate of the Faithful of the Prelature**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Spiritual Life**

79. § 1. The spirit and practice proper to the Prelature have characteristics that are specific and fully determined for the attainment of the Prelature's proper end. Hence, the two aspects of Opus Dei's spirit, the ascetical and the apostolic, are so dependent on each other and are so intrinsically and harmoniously blended and infused with Opus Dei's secular character, that this spirit should always necessarily be accompanied by and lead to a strong and simple unity of life, that is, a

unity of the ascetical, apostolic, social and professional.

79. § 2. So that the ascetical and apostolic demands of the common priesthood and, for clerics, of the ministerial priesthood, be seriously and continually put into practice according to the spirit of Opus Dei, and that the faithful of the Prelature might be an effective leaven of sanctity and apostolate among other clerics and secular lay people, the essential requirement for all of them is an intense life of prayer and sacrifice, in accordance with the duties of piety laid down in this Code and with the other things that pertain to the tradition of Opus Dei.

80. § 1. The solid foundation upon which everything in Opus Dei rests and the fertile root which vivifies everything is a humble and sincere sense of divine filiation in Jesus Christ, leading to a gentle belief in

the fatherly love that God has for us. The faithful of the Prelature also see Christ the Lord, God and man, in his ineffable goodness as a first-born brother. By the grace of the Holy Spirit they try to imitate Jesus, calling to mind especially the marvellous example and the fruitfulness of his life of work in Nazareth.

80. § 2. For this reason, in the life of the faithful of the Prelature, who act in all things like other secular clergy and laity, their equals, there arise a need and a sort of supernatural instinct to purify all things, to elevate them to the order of grace, to sanctify them and to convert them into an occasion of personal union with God by fulfilling his Will, and into an instrument of apostolate.

81. § 1. The root and centre of the spiritual life of the faithful of the Prelature is the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which the Passion and

Death of Jesus Christ are renewed in an unbloody manner and the memory of His infinite and salvific love for everyone is recalled.

81. § 2. Accordingly, all priests should celebrate the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily and the lay members should attend with great devotion, participating sacramentally or at least spiritually in the banquet of Christ's Body. In addition, they should visit Christ in the Blessed Sacrament at some other time during the day.

82. The faithful of the Prelature, while they are engaged in the ordinary events of their life and daily work should – imitating the example of the Apostles who persevered with one accord in prayer, and that of the communities of the first Christians – cultivate the continual union and dialogue with God of a contemplative soul. To this end, it is necessary that

they take care of and foster the following:

1°. every day, in the morning, after making an offering of their work to God, they will spend a half an hour in mental prayer; in the evening, they will dedicate another half hour to prayer. Furthermore, they should spend some time reading the New Testament and some other spiritual book, and they should recite the common prayers (*Preces*) of Opus Dei;

2°. every month, they should devote one day to a spiritual retreat;

3°. every year, they should spend several days in a longer spiritual retreat;

4°. always and everywhere they should consider the presence of God, call to mind their divine filiation, and repeat spiritual communions, acts of thanksgiving, acts of atonement, and

ejaculatory prayers. They should intensely cultivate mortification, study, work, order, and cheerfulness.

83. § 1. In order to conquer the snare of the triple concupiscence, especially the pride of life, which could be fed by one's learning, social status, and professional work, the faithful of the Prelature follow wholeheartedly and intensely the demands of Christian asceticism.

This asceticism rests on a sincere and constant sense of external and internal humility, not only individual but also collective; on the candour of a natural simplicity; on a familiar and noble way of acting; on the habitual expression of serene joy, in work, self-denial, sobriety, acts of sacrifice, and the established practices of daily and weekly corporal mortification in accordance with each person's age and condition. The faithful cultivate all of these as means not only of personal

purification, but also of true and solid spiritual progress, in keeping with the well-tested and proven saying: “You will advance inasmuch as you do violence to yourself.” These mortifications are also practised as the necessary preparation for carrying out any apostolate in society and for the full practice of it: “in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col 1: 24).

83. § 2. This asceticism and spirit of penance carries with it other demands on the life of the faithful of the Prelature, especially a daily examination of conscience, spiritual direction, and the weekly practice of sacramental confession.

84. § 1. The faithful of the Prelature should love and diligently guard chastity, which renders men and women most pleasing to Christ and to his most chaste Mother. They

should be convinced that the work of apostolate must be supported by chastity.

84. § 2. To the guarding of this treasure, which is carried in vessels of clay, the following contribute greatly: flight from the occasions of sin, modesty, temperance, chastisement of the body, frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist, and assiduous and filial recourse to our Mother the Virgin.

85. With tender love and devotion, the faithful of the Prelature should honour the most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our Mother. Every day they should contemplate the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary and recite vocally at least five decades. In those places where this pious practice is not usual, they should replace it with some other equivalent Marian prayer. They should not fail

to honour the Mother of God with filial devotion through the custom of praying the *Angelus* or *Regina Coeli*. On Saturdays they will carry out a mortification and recite the *Salve Regina* or *Regina Coeli*.

86. § 1. The Lord created man in order that he might work (cf. Gen 2:15), and thus this law of work belongs to the general human condition. However, the particular character and end of the Prelature leads its faithful not only to carry out but also to have a profound love for ordinary work; for in it they see not only a most eminent human value, which is necessary for maintaining the dignity of the human person and for the progress of society, but also, and primarily, a wonderful occasion and means of personal union with Christ, by imitating His hidden life of work and generous service to other men and women, and cooperating in this way with the loving work of the

## Creation and Redemption of the world.

86. § 2. Consequently, the particular characteristic of the spirit of Opus Dei consists in this, that everyone is to sanctify their professional work, be sanctified in the perfect fulfilment of their professional work, and sanctify others through their own professional work. From this arise many concrete demands in the ascetical and apostolic life of those who are dedicated to the particular apostolates of the Prelature.

87. § 1. The Prelature of Opus Dei is totally devoted to the service of the Church. The faithful of the Prelature, committing themselves with full, perpetual and definitive dedication to the service of Christ the Lord, will always be ready to leave behind their honour, their possessions, and even their life, for the Church. They will never attempt to use the Church for

themselves. Therefore, they should have a firm, exemplary and pious love for Holy Mother Church and for anything in any way connected to Her. They should have a sincere love and veneration for, and docility and adherence to, the Roman Pontiff and all the Bishops in communion with the Apostolic See, whom the Holy Spirit has appointed to rule the Church of God.

87. § 2. Apart from the prayers for the Supreme Pontiff and the Ordinary of each local Church which are said in the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist and in the daily *Preces* of Opus Dei, each of the faithful should pray for their intentions to the Lord in a special way every day.

88. § 1. The Prelature fosters in its faithful the need to cultivate with special care that obedience and religious submission which all Christians ought to show towards the

Roman Pontiff and the Bishops in communion with the Holy See.

88. § 2. Moreover, all the faithful should humbly obey the Prelate and the other authorities of the Prelature in everything which pertains to the particular aim of Opus Dei. This obedience should be wholly voluntary and have divine love as its motive, imitating Christ the Lord, who, although he was Lord of all, emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and becoming “obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

88. § 3. With respect to professional activity and to opinions on social and political questions or other such matters, each of the faithful of the Prelature enjoys the same full freedom as that of other Catholic citizens, within the limits of Catholic teaching on faith and morals. The Authorities of the Prelature should

refrain completely from giving any advice at all in these matters. Hence, that full liberty can be diminished only by the norms which a Bishop or Bishops' Conference may give for all Catholics in a diocese or jurisdiction. For this reason, the Prelature does not make its own the professional, social, political, or financial activities of any of its faithful.

89. § 1. All the faithful of the Prelature are to love and foster not only individual but also collective humility and therefore never seek glory for Opus Dei. Rather, they are to have this one thing deeply fixed in their soul: that the highest glory of Opus Dei is to live without human glory.

89. § 2. In order to achieve its aim more effectively, Opus Dei as such desires to live humbly. Hence it refrains from collective acts, it has no common name or denomination by

which the faithful of the Prelature are called, and the faithful do not participate collectively in any public manifestations of devotion such as processions. They do not thereby hide that they belong to the Prelature, for the spirit of Opus Dei, while it strongly encourages the faithful to seek collective humility so that they attain a more intense and more abundant apostolic efficacy, at the same time completely shuns secrecy or clandestine activity. Consequently, in every circumscription, the names of the Vicars of the Prelate and those who form their Councils are publicly known. Bishops who ask for them are given not only the names of the priests of the Prelature who exercise their ministry in their respective dioceses, but also those of the Directors of the Centres erected in those dioceses.

89. § 3. On account of this collective humility, Opus Dei may not publish newspapers and publications of any type in the name of the Work.

90. In their professional, family and social lives, the faithful of the Prelature should diligently strive to cultivate the natural virtues which are highly valued in human interaction and help carry out apostolate: fraternity, optimism, daring, holy intransigence in good and upright things, joy, simplicity, nobility and sincerity, and fidelity. They should take care, however, always and in everything to render these virtues supernatural.

91. Mindful of the norms of charity and prudence, the faithful of the Prelature are bound to exercise fraternal correction, so that they draw one another, when necessary, away from behaviour which is opposed to the spirit of Opus Dei.

92. Everyone should carry out even small things with the greatest care and with supernatural spirit, because the essence of the vocation consists in sanctifying daily work. Great matters are not always to hand, and it is in small things that the love of Jesus Christ can be shown most often. This is one of the manifestations of the spirit of penance proper to Opus Dei, which is more to be sought in small, ordinary things and in orderly, constant, daily work.

93. In carrying out their ordinary work with the greatest love of God and neighbour, the faithful of the Prelature should cultivate in all circumstances a living and operative faith and also a filial hope. These virtues enable them to overcome all the obstacles they might encounter in their service to the Church and to souls: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

Therefore, they should not fear anything or anyone: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” (Ps 27(26):1).

94. § 1. The faithful of the Prelature should live with full personal freedom of heart from temporal goods, each according to their own state and condition. Their souls should be detached from all the things that they use, and they should behave temperately in their personal and social lives in accordance with the spirit and practice of Opus Dei. They should place all concern for the things of this world onto God and should live in this world as sojourners who seek a future city.

94. § 2. All the faithful of the Prelature have the duty of providing for their own personal economic needs as well as those of their family, doing so by means of their ordinary professional work, which they carry

out with the mentality and spirit of a father of a large and poor family. Likewise, insofar as they are able, they have the duty of assisting in supporting the apostolate of the Prelature, thereby providing a remedy for the spiritual and material poverty of many people. At the same time, they should rejoice when they experience the consequences of a lack of means, since they know that in their needs they will never be lacking the providence of the Lord, who admonished us to seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice, if we want all the rest to be given to us in addition.

94. § 3. The Prelature, however, ensures that its faithful never lack the necessary spiritual assistance, and the Prelate, either directly or through his Vicars, supports them with his paternal affection, and for that very reason makes demands on everyone, in the measure in which

the various circumstances of each one allow. Therefore, in relation to the faithful of the Prelature and those who reside in Centres of Opus Dei, the Ordinary of the Prelature can, for a just cause, grant a dispensation from the obligation of observing feast days or days of penance, or commute these to some other pious work.

95. As well as the feasts of the Lord and those of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Joseph, the faithful of the Prelature celebrate with special devotion the feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; the Holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael and the Apostles Peter, Paul and John; the other Apostles and Evangelists; the 2nd of October, feast of the Guardian Angels; and the 14th of February. For Opus Dei, these last two feasts are days of thanksgiving.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Doctrinal-Religious Formation**

96. In its doctrinal-religious aspect, the formation imparted to the faithful of the Prelature provides them with a profound knowledge of the Catholic faith and the Church's Magisterium, food which is indeed necessary for their spiritual and apostolic life, so that in every social environment there are intellectually prepared persons who, in a simple way, in the ordinary circumstances of their daily life and work, carry out by their example and word an effective apostolate of evangelization and catechesis.

97. In each regional circumscription, Centres of Studies for all the faithful of the region may be erected as needed by the Regional Vicar, with the consent of his Council and the

confirmation of the Prelate, so that an intense and assiduous doctrinal-religious formation may be suitably given in order to sustain the spiritual life of each one and pursue the Prelature's particular apostolic goal.

98. Having consulted his Council, the Prelate may also establish Interregional Centres of Studies, which depend directly on him, so that faithful of the Prelature selected by the Prelate himself, either directly or at the proposal of the Vicars of the respective circumscriptions, may receive formation in them. These Centres can be set up especially for the faithful – priests or laity – who carry out tasks of formation in the different regions.

99. § 1. The doctrinal-religious instruction, especially as regards philosophy and theology, is imparted by the teachers of the Regional or Interregional Centres of Studies

erected for this purpose. These Centres are separate for men and for women.

99. § 2. A cyclical programme is so arranged that the instruction can be continuously imparted and completed without being an obstacle to the faithful in the fulfilment of their professional and family responsibilities.

100. § 1. The faithful of the Prelature may complete their time of instruction elsewhere than in the juridically established Centres of Studies, if the Regional Vicar should so dispose after having considered the circumstances and consulted his own Council.

100. § 2. During this time, they receive formation from a teacher or teachers chosen by the Regional Vicar.

100. § 3. Subsequently they should take an examination in a juridically established Centre.

101. § 1. All Numeraries as well as those Associates whose personal circumstances so advise should complete the full philosophical biennium and theological quadriennium.

101. § 2. Each year of the biennium and quadriennium is divided into two semesters. Their length (the number of hours dedicated to classes) should be equivalent to that of semester courses at the Roman Pontifical Universities. The syllabuses should be taught with the same breadth as in those Universities.

101. § 3. Depending on their personal circumstances and those of their professional work, each student should take as many years as necessary to complete the twelve

semesters referred to in the preceding paragraphs.

101. § 4. For Assistant Numeraries, the Centres of Studies offer courses of philosophical and theological instruction adapted to their personal circumstances. Such courses of study need not include the whole philosophical-theological curriculum.

101. § 5. The doctrinal instruction of the other faithful of the Prelature consists of an appropriate doctrinal-religious formation which renders them capable of carrying out their apostolate.

102. § 1. For Numeraries destined for the priesthood, the Prelate erects special Centres of Studies. Some other Numeraries, however, who are not going to be priests should also live there. These latter receive the same formation and live the same life as the others, since one and the

same spiritual formation is required for all.

102. § 2. Nevertheless, after completing a sufficiently long training in the Centre of Studies, and during only one year of their studies of sacred theology, candidates for the priesthood should live in a special Centre devoted solely to them.

102. § 3. These same norms can be applied, *congrua congruis referendo*, to Associates who are being formed to receive the priesthood.

103. Teachers should develop their studies of rational philosophy and theology and the instruction of students in these disciplines in accordance with the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor, and they should faithfully hold to these in conformity with the norms that have been or may be issued by the Magisterium of the Councils and of the Holy See.

104. Regarding all those who are destined for the priesthood, the studies mentioned in n. 101, carried out according to the norms of law and the instructions of the Holy See, are to be considered as being of a public nature.

105. All the priests of the Prelature are to obtain a doctoral degree in an ecclesiastical discipline.

106. § 1. From the time they ask for the Admission, and before they are granted the incorporation, all those who desire to be incorporated into the Prelature must receive what is known as the initial doctrinal-religious formation.

106. § 2. After incorporation they must complete the studies mentioned in n. 97. To this end, they will take part in courses organised for homogeneous groups, and will attend meetings, talks and other things of this kind.

107. Upon completion of the respective studies of the doctrinal-religious formation which they receive after their incorporation into the Prelature, all will continue their formation in a permanent manner and for the rest of their life, following a cyclical plan of revision and study in the light of recent advances in knowledge, so that they deepen in their doctrinal formation daily.

108. For Catholic Cooperators and other Cooperators who desire to get to know the doctrine of the Catholic Church, classes, meetings and other similar activities are to be organised, dealing with dogma, morals, and Christian asceticism, so that they may acquire or improve their doctrinal formation.

109. In theological or philosophical questions which the Church leaves open to the free opinion of the

faithful, Opus Dei has no position of its own nor any corporate school. Within the limits laid down by the Church's Hierarchy, which guards the Deposit of faith, the faithful of the Prelature enjoy the same freedom as other Catholic faithful.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Apostolate**

110. The Prelature diligently provides its faithful with a suitable apostolic formation and the pastoral assistance necessary for them to carry out an intense work of evangelisation and catechesis. Thus, in the life of each and every one, the duty and right of Christians to carry out apostolate is constantly put into effect.

111. In the apostolate, the faithful of the Prelature will always remember the following:

1°. the zeal by which we are set on fire seeks only this: that we may lead everyone, as by the hand, with Peter to Jesus through Mary;

2°. we are destined for the multitude. Therefore, making ourselves all things to all people (cf. 1 Cor 9:22), there is no soul whom we do not want to love and help. We could not live in such a way as to neglect the cares and needs of others, because our concern embraces all souls. Living a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col 3:3), we ought to be like yeast hidden in the dough of human society, intermingling with it, until the whole of it is leavened (cf. Mt 13:33).

112. The faithful of the Prelature intend, always and above all things, to carry into effect their personal goal of sanctity and apostolate, faithfully fulfilling the ascetical, formative and disciplinary norms of

Opus Dei. These assist them in their effort to fulfil perfectly their professional, family and social duties, and thus to give constant witness of the Christian meaning of human life and to spread the message of Christ throughout all levels of society, including those which it is difficult for the ordinary apostolic work of priests and religious to reach.

113. Convinced that their particular apostolate proceeds from their own interior life and from their love of human work and that these have to be fused and intertwined in unity of life, the faithful of the Prelature should strive in a special way to sanctify their work, carry it out with maximum human perfection, order it according to the divine Will, and direct it to the salvation of souls, in the first place those of their professional colleagues. Hence, being rooted in the variety of

circumstances which human work brings with it, their apostolic activity does not manifest itself in a uniform or exclusive manner.

114. As well as an apostolate of witness and example that are manifested in a coherent personal life of union with the Lord, the faithful of the Prelature should strive also to speak expressly of God, spreading truth with charity through a constant doctrinal and catechetical apostolate, suited to the particular conditions of those with whom they work and live.

115. The apostolate of the faithful of the Prelature is directed to all men and women without distinction of race, nationality or social class, so that Christians may be invited, instructed and helped to respond to the universal call to holiness in the exercise of their profession and in the fulfilment of the duties proper to

their state; and so that those who do not yet know Christ may receive, by example and by word, testimony of Him and so be prepared to receive the grace of faith.

116. By their divine vocation, the faithful of the Prelature strive to elevate to the supernatural order the sense of service towards people and society with which any professional work ought to be carried out. They consider constantly the fruitfulness of apostolate done with intellectuals who by the teachings they promote, or the roles they perform, or the dignity with which they are invested, have a great capacity to render service to civil society. Consequently, the faithful of the Prelature will work with all their strength so that such persons may also adhere to the doctrine and teachings of Christ the Lord and put them into practice.

117. To make the apostolate more effective, the faithful of the Prelature will strive to give Christian example while carrying out their own professional work and also in their own family, cultural, and social environments. They exercise their personal apostolate especially among their equals and making a special effort through friendship and mutual trust. We are all friends – “I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15) – indeed, we are children of the same Father and hence at the same time brothers and sisters in Christ and of Christ. Therefore, the special means of apostolate for the faithful of the Prelature is that of friendship and continual dealings with their colleagues, without, however, setting up for this purpose special associations which have an external religious activity.

118. A particular characteristic which marks the apostolic work of

the faithful of the Prelature is love for the personal freedom of all men and women, together with the most careful respect for the freedom of consciences and a desire to live in harmony with everyone. By this spirit the faithful are led always to foster sincere charity for those who follow Christ, because they are labouring for Him; and also, having due respect for their beliefs, to love those who do not yet follow Christ, striving to bring them to the Lord by their example and doctrine.

119. The Prelature asks of its faithful an intense and constant personal apostolate, exercised in each person's work and social environment, carried out freely and responsibly, and fully imbued with spontaneity; it should be the fruit of the action of grace, and in full agreement with Christian faith and customs and the Church's Magisterium.

120. In this constant personal apostolate, the faithful of the Prelature employ, according to each person's experience and ability, those means and initiatives which are common in civil society, such as study circles, gatherings, regular meetings, talks, seminars, lectures, study courses, and other similar things, in a way suited to the diverse social environments in which they live.

121. § 1. As well as the personal apostolate which the Prelature fosters in its faithful, and which truly holds the primary place, the Prelature as such lends specific pastoral assistance to works and initiatives of a civil and professional, non-confessional, nature whose aims relate to education, social welfare, etc.

121. § 2. The Ordinary of the Prelature, moved by the need to

accomplish his specific mission, and so as to ensure the best possible fulfilment of the aim of the Prelature, will select with the greatest care the chaplains and religion teachers for initiatives promoted by Opus Dei as such, as well as for those organised by the faithful of the Prelature along with others, which request spiritual help from the Prelature. When appointing these chaplains and religion teachers the Ordinary of the Prelature should never fail to consult his Council, and once the appointments are made, he should communicate them opportunely to the local Ordinary.

122. The Prelature never takes over the technical or financial aspects of the initiatives mentioned in n. 121, nor is it responsible for them; these pertain to the owners or managers who use goods and resources acquired by their own activity, or other similar civil means which they

have acquired or may acquire. Ordinarily the Prelature is not the owner of the material instruments of those initiatives whose spiritual care it undertakes.

123. The Prelature's role in the initiatives mentioned in the previous number consists in giving them a Christian spirit, which is achieved through opportune advice and doctrinal and spiritual formation, along with appropriate pastoral assistance. In all this, the legitimate freedom of conscience of students, residents and all others is carefully respected. In order to exercise this care for each apostolic initiative, a Centre of Opus Dei is erected, after the opportune permission has been received from the local Ordinary, preferably in writing.

124. When one of the faithful of the Prelature, at the request of the local Ordinary and observing the

discipline of the Prelature, personally lends assistance to diocesan activities, he or she does so according to the will and wishes of the local Ordinary in question, and answers to him alone for the work carried out.

## **Title 4**

# **The Governance of the Prelature**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Governance in General**

125. § 1. The governance of the Prelature is entrusted to a Prelate, who is assisted by his Vicars and Councils in accordance with universal law and with this Code.

125. § 2. With respect to priests incardinated in the Prelature, the Prelate's power of governance is full in both the internal and the external

forum; for lay persons incorporated in the Prelature, his power of governance extends only to what concerns the particular end of the Prelature.

125. § 3. The power of the Prelate, with respect to both clerics and lay persons, is exercised in accordance with universal law and with this Code.

125. § 4. The Ordinaries of the Prelature are understood in law to be, and are, the Prelate and those who possess general, ordinary executive power in the Prelature, that is, the Vicars appointed for the governance of the Prelature, both general and regional.

126. The Prelature is divided into regional circumscriptions, each of which is governed by a Vicar, who is called the Regional Counsellor and is assisted by his respective Councils.

127. Except for the office of Prelate, which is for life, all other offices of the Prelature are temporary; renewal of appointment to them, however, is permitted.

128. The whole Prelature and its parts are lawfully represented only by the Prelate or his delegates, including in all juridical matters; if, however, the office of the Prelate is vacant or impeded, it is represented by the person who assumes governance in accordance with n. 149 §§ 1 and 4. Each regional circumscription of Opus Dei is also represented by its proper Vicar.

129. § 1. The Prelature and the circumscriptions which have juridical personality acquire, possess, administer, and dispose of temporal goods in accordance with the law and with the provisions established by the Prelate.

129. § 2. Of all the goods which may be assigned to the Prelature, whatever their source, only those which have in fact been assigned to the Prelature by the Prelate are to be considered ecclesiastical goods in accordance with the law.

129. § 3. The Prelature and the circumscriptions mentioned in § 1 are answerable for the obligations which respectively they may have contracted. They always observe faithfully the legitimate civil laws of the region or nation concerned and operate within the limits established by them.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Central Governance**

130. § 1. The Prelate, who internally is called Father and whose office is for life, is chosen – excluding the system of election by compromise –

by an elective General Congress convened for this purpose. His election requires the confirmation of the Roman Pontiff.

130. § 2. The General Congress is composed of Electors, who are also called members of the Congress. Electors are priests or lay men, of at least thirty-two years of age, who have been definitively incorporated in the Prelature for at least nine years, and have been selected from among the faithful of the Prelature in the various nations and regions in which Opus Dei carries out its apostolic work. They are appointed for life by the Prelate, with the deliberative vote of his Council, after consulting the Regional Commission and the Electors of the respective Region.

130. § 3. Before the Congress can validly proceed to the election of the Prelate, it should ask for and receive

from each and every member of the Central Council mentioned in n. 146 proposals concerning the name or names of the person or persons whom they consider most worthy and suitable for the highest office in the Prelature.

130. § 4. When the person elected has duly accepted the election, he must request, either personally or through another, confirmation of the election from the Roman Pontiff.

131. In order for someone to be elected Prelate, it is required:

1°. that he be a priest member of the General Congress, incorporated in the Prelature for at least ten years, ordained as a priest for at least five years, the son of a legitimate marriage, enjoying a good reputation and being at least forty years of age;

2°. that, in addition, he be outstanding in prudence, piety,

exemplary love and obedience towards the Church and her Magisterium, commitment to Opus Dei, love for the faithful of the Prelature, and zeal for his neighbour;

3°. that he be endowed with special culture including of a secular nature, with a doctoral degree in an ecclesiastical discipline, and with the other qualities necessary for carrying out his role.

132. § 1. As the Prelate presides by his authority over the faithful committed to his care (and so can also be called President General), it is fitting that he also stand above the others in virtues and qualities, especially those which are proper to Opus Dei and those which are a consequence of its spirit.

132. § 2. In the exercise of his pastoral office, the Prelate must ensure in a special way that all the law by which Opus Dei is governed

and all its legitimate customs are observed exactly; and faithfully promote the fulfilment of the dispositions of the Holy See regarding the Prelature.

132. § 3. He should therefore be a teacher and Father for all the faithful of the Prelature, one who truly loves them all in the heart of Christ. With overflowing charity he should teach and encourage everyone, and he should gladly spend and exceed himself for all.

132. § 4. He should ensure especially that the spiritual and intellectual means and help which are necessary for nourishing and fostering their spiritual life and achieving their specific apostolic aim be offered assiduously and abundantly to the priests and lay men and women entrusted to him.

132. § 5. He should manifest his pastoral care by giving advice and

exhortations, together with laws, prescriptions and instructions, and, if needed, appropriate sanctions; also by visitations made by himself or others delegated by him in the circumscriptions and Centres and in the churches of the Prelature or those entrusted to it, regarding both persons and things.

132. § 6. In order to provide for the Prelate's spiritual welfare and health, there should be two *Custodes* or *admonitores*. These, however, are not members of the General Council by reason of such office. They are appointed for a term of eight years by the Prelate himself from among nine of the faithful of the Prelature mentioned in n. 13 proposed by the General Council. They share family life with the Prelate.

133. § 1. Apart from the elective General Congress, ordinary General Congresses convoked by the Prelate

must be held every eight years, in order to evaluate the state of the Prelature and to suggest opportune norms for future governance activity. The Congress is presided over by the Prelate or, by his delegation, the *dignior* of the General Council.

133. § 2. An extraordinary General Congress is to be convoked when, in the judgement of the Prelate, with the deliberative vote of his Council, circumstances so demand; and also for the appointment or the revocation of appointment of an auxiliary Vicar or Vice-president in accordance with nn. 134 § 2 and 137 § 2.

133. § 3. General Congresses, both ordinary and extraordinary, are also convoked for the women's Section; elective Congresses, however, are not. The Prelate presides over such Congresses, assisted by his auxiliary Vicar (if there is one) and the Vicar

Secretary General and Central Priest Secretary. The members of the women's Congresses are appointed in the same way as the members of the men's Congresses.

133. § 4. After consulting the permanent Commission of his Council mentioned in n. 138 § 2, the Prelate can call upon faithful of the Prelature who are not Electors but are experts in different matters to attend the General Congress as collaborators, having a voice but no vote. This applies also for the women in their own Section.

134. § 1. If the Prelate judges in the Lord that it is appropriate or useful to appoint an auxiliary Vicar in accordance with n. 135, he can freely appoint one after consulting his Council. The full General Council can also sincerely suggest to the Prelate the advisability of designating an auxiliary Vicar, who can assist him in

his governance for a period of eight years. If there are no serious reasons to the contrary, the Prelate should readily accept the will of the Council.

134. § 2. If, however, the Prelate appears to need the auxiliary Vicar mentioned in n. 136, then the full Council, after mature consideration of the matter before God, can convoke a Congress. The appointment of an auxiliary Vicar in accordance with n. 136 is reserved exclusively to such a Congress. For the Council validly to convoke a Congress for this purpose, a formal deliberation is required in which two thirds of the full Council and one of the *Custodes* request the aforesaid appointment. The Vicar Secretary General is then obliged to convoke an extraordinary General Congress, presided over by the Vicar Secretary General himself.

134. § 3. Except for age, the same qualities are required for an auxiliary Vicar as for a Prelate.

135. The auxiliary Vicar, if he is appointed while a Prelate is in possession of his faculties, assists him; if the Prelate is absent or impeded he takes his place. He has no other faculties except those which the Prelate delegates to him habitually or *ad casum*. He should faithfully give an account to the Prelate regarding all that he does.

136. § 1. If the Prelate, even when assisted by the ordinary auxiliary Vicar mentioned in n. 135, clearly appears through old age, illness, or some other very grave cause to become so incapable of governing that the continuation of his governance would actually be harmful to the Prelature, an auxiliary Vicar can then be elected by a Congress, and all the rights and

duties of the Prelate, except for the title, will be transferred to him. The person elected must ask the Holy See for confirmation of the election, either personally or through another.

136. § 2. The judgement as to the existence and gravity of causes for the appointment of this auxiliary Vicar and, if necessary, for his election, or, on the contrary, the judgement concerning the advisability of appointing an ordinary auxiliary Vicar or changing him should this seem sufficient, is reserved to the Congress. By a two-thirds majority, this Congress has to decide, all things considered, what best serves the good of the Prelature.

137. § 1. The appointment of the ordinary auxiliary Vicar can be revoked at the wish of the Prelate. If opportune, the Prelate can consult his General Council concerning this

revocation, just as he would in the appointment mentioned in n. 134 § 1.

137. § 2. An auxiliary Vicar who replaces the Prelate in governance remains in place until the next ordinary Congress. An extraordinary Congress, however, may be convoked and may revoke the appointment. Especially if the reasons for the suspension of the Prelate's governance are considered to be not necessarily permanent, a Congress, either ordinary or extraordinary, may delegate to the full General Council, proceeding with moral unanimity, the faculty of revoking the appointment of the auxiliary Vicar and re-establishing the Prelate's governance. In this event, these matters should be communicated to the Holy See.

138. § 1. The General Council is to assist the Prelate in directing and governing the Prelature. It consists of

the auxiliary Vicar (if there is one), the Vicar Secretary General, the Vicar for the women's Section, called the Central Priest Secretary, at least three Vice-secretaries, at least one Delegate from each Region, a Prefect of Studies, and a General Administrator. These constitute the full Council, and they are called Consultors.

138. § 2. The permanent Commission of the Council consists of the Prelate, the auxiliary Vicar (if there is one), the Secretary General, the Central Priest Secretary, and, as needed, one of the Vice-secretaries or the Prefect of Studies or the General Administrator. Some members of this commission can be lay men, when dealing with matters which do not require the character of holy Orders, but the auxiliary Vicar, the Secretary General and the Central Secretary, who are also Vicars of the Prelate,

are always appointed from among the priests.

138. § 3. Those Consultors who are present must always be admitted to the General Council in accordance with n. 139. Those who are absent by reason of their office can also be called to attend if the Prelate so decides, and if so called, must attend.

139. § 1. In order to resolve matters which according to the law require a deliberative vote of the General Council, at least those Consultors who are not absent by reason of their office must always be called. In order for a decision of the Council to be valid, at least five of its members must be present. If it is not possible to call five Consultors to attend, or if, having been called, they cannot be present, the Prelate, together with those present, may designate some person or persons from among the

Electors, who on that occasion will replace those who are absent.

139. § 2. For other questions, the competent Council is the permanent Commission of the General Council itself.

140. § 1. The offices of the General Council are to be filled by the following process. Immediately after the Roman Pontiff confirms his election, the Prelate carefully gathers the information which in the Lord he judges he needs, and then proposes to the Congress, one by one and in order, the names of the candidates for the different offices. As each name is proposed by the Prelate, the Congress, in accordance with universal law, votes by secret ballot. If the proposed name is not approved by the Congress, the Prelate must propose another name until he obtains a favourable vote.

140. § 2. Every eight years, each and every office of general governance except that of the Prelate is to be submitted to the review of the Congress, following the same procedure. There is no limit to the number of times a person may be re-elected to the same or to some other general office. Nevertheless, it is highly desirable that, as a rule, some new members be appointed to the General Council.

141. When, for any canonical reason, the office of a Consultor is vacant, the Prelate proposes a candidate for the office of Consultor to the General Council, which, following the same procedure as in a General Congress, can accept or reject him by secret ballot. If it seems opportune, the Prelate is free on these occasions, after consulting his Council, to make changes among the Consultors as regards some of the duties assigned to Consultors.

142. The Secretary General, the Central Priest Secretary and the General Administrator must be members of the Congress. For the other offices of the General Council, only the faithful of the Prelature mentioned in n. 13 are eligible. Above all, they must stand out for their prudence, culture and dedication to Opus Dei.

143. Although their term of office is eight years, the Prelate, after consulting the other Consultors, may nevertheless remove Consultors for just causes and as often as the greater good of the Prelature so requires. Also, all are free to resign from their offices, although the resignation has no effect until it is accepted by the Prelate.

144. § 1. Among the Consultors the Secretary General takes precedence. He is always a priest, and if there is no auxiliary Vicar he comes after the

Prelate and substitutes for him in his absence or if he is in any way impeded. In addition, he assists the Prelate especially in those things that pertain to the governance and initiatives of the universal Prelature and also in questions relating to financial matters. He enjoys only those faculties which are delegated to him by the Prelate, either habitually or *ad casum*.

144. § 2. To the extent possible, the Secretary General carries out and resolves matters according to the Prelate's criteria, mind, and practice. Hence he may not alter anything done or prescribed by the Prelate, but will always be as faithful as possible to the Prelate and his Council.

144. § 3. Moreover, it is his function to distribute tasks among the members of the Council and to

require of them the faithful completion of those tasks.

145. § 1. The Vicar who is called Central Priest Secretary gives special assistance to the Prelate in overseeing the women's Section of Opus Dei (cf. n. 4 § 3).

145. § 2. He comes after the Secretary General and enjoys those faculties which the Prelate delegates to him, either habitually or *ad casum*. He must be at least forty years of age.

146. § 1. The women's Section is governed by the Prelate with the auxiliary Vicar (if there is one), the Vicar Secretary General, the Central Vicar Secretary and the Central Council, which is called the Central Advisory and has the same role in the women's Section as the General Council has in the men's Section.

146. § 2. The Central Advisory consists of the Central Secretary, the

Secretary of the Advisory, at least three Vice-secretaries, at least one Delegate from each Region, a Prefect of Studies, a Prefect of Assistant Numeraries, and a Central Procurator.

146. § 3. The Prelate makes appointments to the offices of the Central Advisory in a women's Congress, following the procedure for filling the offices of the General Council in a men's Congress. The Central Secretary and the Central Procurator are selected from among members of the women's Congress; for other offices of the Advisory, Numeraries mentioned in n. 13 are to be appointed.

147. § 1. For financial matters, the Prelate is assisted by a Council appointed by him, called a Technical Advisory, which is presided over by the Prelate, or by his delegation the General Administrator.

147. § 2. At least once a year, financial accounts signed by the General Administrator must be presented to the Prelate and his Council.

147. § 3. There is a similar Council for the financial affairs of the women's Section.

148. § 1. Without forming part of the General Council by virtue of their office, there are also a Procurator or *Agens precum*, who must always be a priest and who represents the Prelature before the Holy See by habitual delegation of the Prelate, and a Priest Prefect for Spiritual Matters, who under the direction of the Prelate and the Council oversees the general spiritual direction of all the faithful of the Prelature.

148. § 2. The Prefect assists the President General in providing spiritual care for the Associates and Supernumeraries of the Priestly

Society of the Holy Cross. He does so in accordance with the faculties that the President delegates to him, either habitually or *ad casum*.

148. § 3. The Procurator and the Prefect are appointed by the Prelate, after he has consulted his Council, for a term of eight years.

149. § 1. When the office of Prelate is vacant, the auxiliary Vicar (if there is one) governs; otherwise the Secretary General or, after him, the Central Vicar Secretary, does so. If all these are absent, the priest Elector who receives the greatest number of votes from those entitled to form part of the permanent Commission of the General Council is appointed.

149. § 2. Whoever governs is bound by the obligations and enjoys the power of the Prelate, except for those things excluded by the nature of the matter or by the law of the Prelature. He must convoke the elective

General Congress within a month of the vacancy of the office, so that it takes place within three months of that vacancy. If for a grave reason the Congress cannot meet within the established time, it meets as soon as the obstacle is removed.

149. § 3. When the office of the Prelate is vacant, those who hold offices of governance in the universal Prelature or in the circumscriptions continue in the exercise of their offices until, after the election of a new Prelate, they are confirmed in them or replaced.

149. § 4. If the Prelate is incapacitated, the norms established in § 1 are to be followed. If, however, in very serious circumstances they cannot be followed, the members of the General Council who are able to do so should assemble under the presidency of the *dignior* and should designate a priest who, insofar as it is

possible, is a member of the Congress, to take on the interim governance of the Prelature.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Regional and Local Governance**

150. With the agreement of his Council, the Prelate can modify, change, otherwise define, and also suppress regional circumscriptions, which are called Regions or Quasi-Regions.

151. § 1. The governance of each Region is entrusted to a Vicar, called the Regional Counsellor, whom the Prelate appoints with the deliberative vote of his Council. A Council called the Regional Commission assists the Counsellor; it consists of up to twelve members whom the Prelate also appoints from among the faithful of the Prelature

mentioned in n. 13, after having consulted his Council. For the members mentioned in n. 157 § 1 and n. 159, the agreement of his Council is required.

151. § 2. Among the members of the Commission, the *Defensor* occupies a special place. His task is to foster the fulfilment of the norms of this Code.

152. § 1. When not all the necessary elements for constituting new Regions exist, Quasi-Regions can be erected by the Prelate with the deliberative vote of his Council. These are governed by Vicars who are equal in law to Regional Vicars.

152. § 2. After consulting his Council, the Prelate can also erect Delegations which depend directly upon himself. The Prelate grants to a delegate Vicar the faculties which, according to the case, he judges should be entrusted to him, but within the limits of the faculties of Regional Counsellors.

153. In order to take better care of the apostolic work within a circumscription, the Prelate can erect Delegations dependent on the Commission of that circumscription, after consulting his Council and those affected. A delegate Vicar with his own Council and endowed with the required faculties is placed over each Delegation.

154. By virtue of their erection, Regions, Quasi-Regions and Delegations depending on the Prelate *ipso facto* acquire juridical personality. Delegations set up within a regional circumscription may be endowed with juridical personality in the decree of erection.

155. Apart from the Prelate and his delegates, only the respective Vicars may represent the circumscriptions enjoying juridical personality mentioned in n. 154 with respect to juridical affairs and in general with

respect to all matters. The Vicars can act by themselves or through other persons endowed with an opportune mandate.

156. § 1. Regional offices are conferred by the Prelate after consulting his Council, except for those of the Counsellor, the Regional Priest Secretary and the Regional Administrator, who must be appointed in accordance with nn. 151, 157 § 1 and 159. Regional offices have a term of five years, unless extended to eight years for all or some members of the Commission. For Regional Delegates, what is prescribed in n. 140 §§ 1 and 2 applies.

156. § 2. The Prelate makes appointments to the offices of the Commission in the Quasi-Regions and the Delegations, after consulting his Council.

157. § 1. In each Region the respective Regional Vicar Counsellor, together with another priest called the Regional Priest Secretary, appointed by the Prelate with the deliberative vote of his Council after consulting the Central Advisory, governs the women's Section, in the name and in place of the Prelate, and always according to his mind, together with the women's regional Council, called the Regional Advisory, which holds the same place in the women's Section as the Regional Commission in the men's Section.

157. § 2. The Regional Advisory can consist of up to twelve members, selected from among the Numeraries mentioned in n. 13. They are appointed by the Prelate after consulting the Central Advisory, whose consent is required for the offices of Regional Secretary and Regional Procurator.

157. § 3. The Prelate makes appointments to the offices of the Advisory in the Quasi-Regions and the Delegations, after consulting the Central Advisory.

158. If at some time an impediment arises in a Region which makes communication with the Prelate and his Council impossible, and if while the situation lasts a member of the Commission resigns, the Commission itself elects another Numerary to his office by majority vote. When, however, three members of the Commission are missing or when the Commission itself has completed its term and needs to be renewed, Numeraries will be appointed to these offices by the majority vote of a special assembly composed of all the unimpeded Electors of the Region and all the members of the Commission; the Elector with the greatest seniority will preside over this assembly. But if for any reason at

least three Electors cannot attend the assembly, three Numeraries from among those mentioned in n. 13 who are not impeded and in order of their seniority in the Region are to be called. If the Electors are absent, the senior among those present will preside. The president of the assembly settles any tied votes.

159. § 1. In each Region, the Regional Vicar is assisted in financial matters by a finance council or Technical Advisory, whose members are designated by the Vicar himself. The Regional Administrator, who is appointed by the Prelate with the deliberative vote of his Council, presides over the Technical Advisory.

159. § 2. There is a similar advisory body for the financial matters of the women's Section.

160. In each circumscription there is a Regional Priest Prefect for Spiritual Matters, who, while not forming part

of the Commission by reason of his office, has the function of fostering, under the Counsellor's direction, the spiritual life of all the faithful of the Prelature. He assists the Counsellor, moreover, in giving spiritual care to the Associates and Supernumeraries of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, in accordance with the faculties that the Counsellor delegates to him, habitually or *ad casum*. He is appointed for five years by the Prelate, after consulting the Counsellor and the *Defensor* of the Region.

161. § 1. In each circumscription Centres are to be erected in accordance with n. 177.

161. § 2. Local governance is made up of the Director with his Council. These offices have a term of three years and are conferred by the Counsellor, after consulting his Council.

161. § 3. The concept of Centre used in this Code is personal rather than territorial, and regional rather than local.

161. § 4. In order that the faithful of the Prelature may be properly cared for, faithful or even groups of faithful can belong to the same Centre, whether they live in the same city or in different cities or dioceses.

161. § 5. Hence, in the Prelature there are autonomous Centres and Centres which, since they have not yet been canonically erected, are dependent on others.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Regional Assemblies**

162. For the more effective formation of the faithful of the Prelature and for a better development of its apostolic activity, an Assembly, in

which the experience of the previous years is evaluated, is by custom held in each Region every ten years.

163. Apart from ordinary Assemblies, extraordinary Assemblies may also be held in one or several circumscriptions, whenever the Prelate, after consulting the General Council and the Regional Commission, considers it useful.

164. By mandate of the Prelate, the Vicar of the circumscription convokes the Assembly, designating the time and place of its meeting at least three months before it is held.

165. Presiding over the participants in the Assembly is the Prelate or his delegate who is assisted by the Vicar and the Delegate of the circumscription. The youngest lay person present serves as the secretary.

166. § 1. The following are to attend the Assembly of each circumscription:

1°. all who hold or have held an office on the Commission;

2°. all Electors ascribed to the circumscription;

3°. from among those mentioned in n. 13, all the priests of the Region and some of the other faithful of the Prelature;

4°. Directors of the Centres of Studies;

5°. also, local Directors designated by the Prelate.

166. § 2. Other faithful of the Prelature who are experts in various matters can be called to the Assembly in order to take part as collaborators.

167. § 1. The maximum participation of all the faithful of the Prelature in these Assemblies is to be fostered, requesting of them that they submit suggestions, notes relating their experiences, and other things of this sort.

167. § 2. For the same reason, if circumstances recommend it, there can be several meetings in different locations, so that these Assemblies may be more effective.

167. § 3. Notes or papers relating experiences can also be requested from the Cooperators of Opus Dei, including non-Catholics, so that they may offer their suggestions for the study of the work topics.

168. At least one month before it is held, all those called to the Assembly are to send to the secretary the notes, papers, suggestions, etc., which they think it fitting to propose. From these and from all the suggestions sent to

the Assembly (n. 167), a commission appointed by the president will draw up a list of questions to be submitted to those taking part.

169. The conclusions of the Assembly do not have any binding force until they have received the approval of the Prelate after consulting his Council, unless by the nature of the matter a deliberative vote of that Council is required. The Prelate himself will also give opportune instructions through the ordinary governance bodies.

170. Assemblies of the women's Section are to be held following the norms set out in nn. 162 and following, *congrua congruis referendo*.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Relations with Diocesan Bishops**

171. The Prelature of Opus Dei is immediately and directly subject to the Holy See, which has approved its spirit and mission, and watches over and promotes its governance and discipline for the good of the whole Church.

172. § 1. All the faithful of the Prelature are obliged to obey the Roman Pontiff humbly in all matters; this obligation of obedience embraces all the faithful in a strong and sweet bond.

172. § 2. They are also subject to the local Ordinaries in accordance with universal law in the same way as other Catholics in their own diocese, as specified in the provisions of this Code.

173. § 1. The Prelate should diligently see to the execution of all decrees, rescripts and other dispositions of the Holy See which concern the Prelature. In accordance with the law, he should also provide the Holy See with appropriate reports about the state of the Prelature and its apostolic activity.

173. § 2. The Prelate himself, because the spirit of Opus Dei fosters with great love filial union with the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, will ensure that documents and acts of his Magisterium that relate to the universal Church are known thoroughly by all the faithful of the Prelature, so that those faithful spread the doctrine they contain.

174. § 1. The entire apostolic work which the Prelature pursues in accordance with its nature and proper aim contributes to the good of the individual local Churches. The

Prelature always fosters due relations with the territorial ecclesiastical authority.

174. § 2. The Prelate should ensure, moreover, that in each circumscription the competent Vicar, personally or through others in his name, maintain regular relations with the Bishops of the dioceses in which faithful of the Prelature reside, and especially that he speak frequently with the Bishops of those places in which Opus Dei has erected Centres. He should do likewise with those who hold leadership positions in the respective Bishops' Conferences, so as to receive from these Bishops the indications which the faithful of the Prelature, in a filial spirit, are to put into practice (cf. n. 176).

175. As well as the prayers which they must recite daily for the Roman Pontiff and the diocesan Bishop and

their intentions, the faithful of the Prelature will manifest the greatest reverence and love for them and will also strive earnestly to foster this reverence and love in all those around them.

176. In each circumscription, the authorities of the Prelature are to ensure that its faithful are well informed about the pastoral norms and guidelines established by the competent territorial ecclesiastical Authority (Bishops' Conference, diocesan Bishop, etc.), so that each one may put them into effect and cooperate with them, according to his or her own personal, family and professional circumstances.

177. § 1. For the apostolic work of the Prelature to begin in a diocese through the canonical erection of the first Centre from which collective apostolate can be carried out, the local Ordinary must be informed

beforehand. His permission is required, preferably given in writing.

177. § 2. Whenever the progress of the apostolic work advises the erection of other Centres in the diocese, the procedure described in the previous paragraph is to be followed.

177. § 3. When a Centre of the Prelature which does not have a church attached to it simply moves to a different building within the boundaries of the same city, this should be communicated in writing to the local Ordinary, even though a new permission is not required.

178. § 1. The erection of a Centre brings with it the power of erecting another Centre for the women faithful of the Prelature dedicated to the domestic Administration of the first-named Centre, so that in law and in fact there are two Centres at

each address of Opus Dei (cf. n. 8 § 2).

178. § 2. It likewise brings with it the faculty of having an oratory in each Centre in accordance with the law, for the use of the faithful of the Prelature and others; of reserving there the Blessed Sacrament; and of celebrating there the ceremonies appropriate for the apostolic work. Solemn Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament is to be held in these oratories at least on the night before the first Friday of each month.

178. § 3. The Ordinary of the Prelature may, with due cause, allow priests to celebrate Holy Mass twice a day, above all when pastoral needs require it, and even three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation, so that they are thus able to attend to the needs not only of the faithful of the Prelature, but also to those of the

other faithful of the diocese, to the extent possible.

179. The diocesan Bishop has the right of visiting each canonically erected Centre of the Prelature (cf. n. 177) in relation to those things that concern the church, the sacristy, and the place for the sacrament of Penance.

180. Whenever the Prelature erects churches or when a church already existing in a diocese is entrusted to it, in each instance a suitable agreement should be drawn up, in accordance with the law, between the diocesan Bishop and the Prelate or the competent Regional Vicar. In addition to the norms established in each agreement, the general diocesan dispositions concerning secular churches will be observed in these churches.

## **Title 5**

### **The Stability and Force of this Code**

181. § 1. This Code is the foundation of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

Therefore its norms should be considered holy, inviolable, perpetual, and reserved solely to the Holy See, with respect both to changes and to the introduction of new provisions.

181. § 2. Only a General Congress of the Prelature may request from the Holy See the modification of a provision of this Code or the introduction of some innovation, or the temporary or permanent suspension or suppression of some norm. The Congress may do so only if it has certitude concerning the necessity of such a modification, innovation, suspension or suppression.

181. § 3. For such juridical certitude to exist, when it is a question of a suppression, innovation or indefinite suspension of a text, a long trial period is required, confirmed by the authority of two ordinary General Congresses, and then submitted to a third ordinary General Congress and approved by at least a two-thirds majority vote.

181. § 4. When, however, it is a question of the temporary suspension of some provision of the Code, the Prelate, with the deliberative vote of only one General Congress, may request it from the Holy See. Nevertheless, it must be made clear to the Holy See how long the requested suspension is to last.

182. § 1. The Authorities of the Prelature are obliged to foster in every way the application of this Code, and prudently and effectively demand it, for they know that it is a

sure means of sanctification for the faithful of the Prelature. Hence, no custom or desuetude can ever override this Code.

182. § 2. The faculty of dispensing from the disciplinary fulfilment of this Code, in those things which may be dispensed and are not reserved to the Holy See, corresponds solely to the Prelate with the consultative vote of his Council, if the matter is of great importance or the dispensation is to apply to the whole Prelature; in other cases a decree of the Regional Vicar with the agreement of his Council is sufficient.

183. § 1. The provisions of this Code which refer to divine or ecclesiastical laws retain the obligation that those laws have in themselves.

183. § 2. The provisions of this Code which refer to governance, and those which define the necessary functions of governance and the offices by

which it is exercised, specifically in what refers to its fundamental norms, and likewise the provisions which establish and consecrate the nature and aim of the Prelature, oblige in conscience according to the gravity of the matter.

183. § 3. Provisions which are purely disciplinary or ascetical and which do not fall within the preceding paragraphs of this number do not *per se* directly oblige under pain of sin. However, it is a sin to violate any of them, even the least, out of formal contempt. If a transgression is committed deliberately or with bad intention or gives rise to scandal, it implies a sin against the corresponding virtues.

184. It belongs to the Prelate with the deliberative vote of his Council to define everything related to the practical interpretation, application, and fulfilment of this Code.

185. Whatever is established for men in this code, even though expressed in the masculine, applies equally in law to women, unless the context or the nature of the matter indicate otherwise, or unless special provisions are explicitly given.

## **Final Dispositions**

1. Those things granted, declared, or approved by the Apostolic See in favour of Opus Dei up to this time remain intact, insofar as they are compatible with the juridical governance of a personal Prelature. Likewise, permissions for the canonical erection of Centres of Opus Dei granted up to this time by local Ordinaries remain in force, as do subsequent acts of erection.

2. With respect to all the faithful – priests and laity – already incorporated into Opus Dei, and with respect to the Associate and

Supernumerary priests of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, this Code enters into force on the 8th of December, 1982.

All these persons are bound by the same obligations and conserve the same rights that they had under the previous juridical regime, unless the provisions of this Code expressly provide otherwise, or unless it is a question of matters arising from norms repealed by this new law.

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