

Some clarifications on an article published in the "Financial Times Magazine"

Press Release from the Opus Dei Information Office in response to an article published in the Financial Times Magazine. It expresses "the desire to learn from mistakes made", as well as the need to "make some additional clarifications".

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Rome, 16 March 2024. The *Financial Times Magazine* has published a report in which three women recount negative experiences regarding their personal situation while they were part of Opus Dei, decades ago. In response to these accounts, we wish to say that we respect their voices, and that our priority is to listen and establish a channel of dialogue in order to understand each individual's experience.

It is clear that there is pain in these testimonies and it is also clear that we have not always been sensitive enough to listen at the time, especially when some of the people needed more support. In these cases, Opus Dei will never tire of asking for forgiveness and trying to help each of these women according to their needs.

To this end, healing and resolution protocols have been set up and made available, aimed at receiving any negative experiences that may have occurred, asking for forgiveness and making amends where appropriate. This channel has already proven to be very positive in some places: it has allowed for the resolution of specific grievances and the rebuilding of relationships.

This does not mean that all media accusations are accepted, and the article itself includes several denials. While every effort is being made to give the utmost attention to each of the situations included in the report, we would like to make some additional clarifications:

1. The vocation of assistant

numerary is being followed by thousands of women around the world with freedom, love and commitment, and has the

same dignity as any other life choice. In fact, many women who joyfully live out this vocational call made a public plea a few months ago for their free and conscious choice to be respected and not undervalued. Beyond the vocational aspect, like all members of Opus Dei, the assistant numeraries carry out work that is paid and in total accordance with the labour legislation of the countries in which they work. To present this vocation in terms of "servitude" is a flat misrepresentation of reality.

2. People are members of Opus Dei of their own free will and with total freedom, from the age of majority, after a long process of incorporation. First of all, the person has to express their desire to become a member. Then, over the course of six months, the candidate

receives personal formation and accompaniment to enable them to understand in depth the type of commitment for which they are preparing. This is followed by at least another year of formation. Once incorporated on a temporary basis, the person must confirm annually for five years their desire to continue. In summary, a person has to reaffirm his or her desire to be a member not once, twice or three times, but at least 8 times. These guidelines are intended to avoid any kind of uninformed or forced recruitment: only those who truly desire it with all their heart, conscience and freedom can choose a vocational life in a Church institution.

3. The catering colleges and hospitality schools mentioned in the report are non-profit socio-educational initiatives

approved and supervised by all the competent state authorities in the countries where they were or are established. These schools provided an opportunity for thousands of women to continue their secondary education - often free of charge - and, in addition, to train for a trade (through state-approved programmes and with parental authorisation). By way of example, information about one of the initiatives indirectly referred to in the article, its curricula, official approvals and inspections, testimonies of students who studied there and photos of the facilities is public and can be found at www.infoycontexto.com/en.

4. Opus Dei is a global organisation, and many of its members (numeraries, assistant numeraries, priests)

can, if they wish, live for a time in another country where there is a need or an opportunity. It is a free decision, and many people offer to move on their own initiative because they see it as an enriching experience from a cultural, vocational, spiritual and professional point of view. In all cases, they must express this desire in writing. These stays can be for study or for any type of collaboration.

Beyond these clarifications, we acknowledge that some women have made other claims about situations that may have occurred, specifically referring to bad personal experiences while they were members: lack of emotional support, failures in discernment processes, outdated work practices, failures to distinguish personal and professional environments, lack of

professional development opportunities, and failures in accompaniment when they left Opus Dei.

Finally, the bad experiences reported reflect situations that occurred decades ago. The institutions referred to no longer exist. We have worked hard at professionalising and improving the processes of accompaniment and development of members' personal and professional lives (as mentioned in the article). If there are any recent cases of malpractice, they will be thoroughly investigated and the necessary measures taken to avoid any repetition.

We want to learn from our mistakes and continue to improve. Good intentions do not exempt people from making mistakes, and this must be accepted with Christian humility, especially since Opus Dei is an

organisation that seeks to do good, and nothing is further from its spirit than to cause pain to those who were part of its family.

Opus Dei communications office in Rome

Link: Interview with Kathryn Plazek, member of Opus Dei's Central Advisory in Rome.

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