

# Opus Dei Fact Sheet

A brief summary of Opus Dei

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**Mission & Characteristics:** Saint Josemaría Escrivá founded Opus Dei in 1928 to help people live by the Gospel in their daily activities and make Christ present in every endeavor. Opus Dei focuses on work and daily life as an occasion for spiritual growth and an opportunity to contribute to a better world. Opus Dei also emphasizes divine filiation, unity of life, prayer and sacrifice,

charity, apostolate and fidelity to the Pope.

**Activities:** The chief activity of Opus Dei members is personal effort to grow in holiness, carry out apostolate and improve society. In support of these efforts, Opus Dei provides spiritual direction, prayer and study meetings, retreats, classes and workshops. These activities take place in an Opus Dei center, or in a church, office or private home. Members also sometimes join with non-members to organize educational, charitable, and cultural projects, which may include spiritual formation carried out by Opus Dei.

**Place in the Church:** Opus Dei is a personal prelature, which is a part of the hierarchical structure of the Church established by the Vatican. Personal prelatures exist to carry out specific missions in the Church, so their membership is determined not

by geography, as in the case of a diocese, but by personal incorporation into the prelature. The members of a prelature continue to belong to their local dioceses, while receiving spiritual attention from the prelature and actively participating in its mission. The Opus Dei Prelature is governed world-wide by a Prelate in Rome, Bishop Javier Echevarría.

**Membership:** Anyone, including non-Catholics, may attend spiritual activities or participate in service initiatives. Catholics who have been involved in Opus Dei activities may become members if they have a vocation to a lifelong commitment to Opus Dei. As of 2010 (Source: The Vatican's *Annuario Pontificio*), Opus Dei had 89,560 members, of whom 1,996 were priests. Most members are married; some members commit themselves to celibacy, while remaining as laypersons. Opus Dei

also has cooperators, who are not members but contribute with their work, alms or prayers.

**Founder:** Saint Josemaría Escrivá was born in Spain in 1902. He founded Opus Dei in 1928, and died on June 26, 1975. Pope John Paul II canonized him in Saint Peter's Square on October 6, 2002, describing him as “the saint of the ordinary.” Benedict XVI has expressed his affection Saint Josemaría on multiple occasions. In 2005 Pope Benedict blessed a large new marble statue of Saint Josemaría in a niche in Saint Peter's Basilica, saying God had chosen Opus Dei's founder “to proclaim the universal vocation to holiness and the apostolate in the Church.” Before becoming pope, in 2002, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger described Opus Dei as “this surprising union of absolute fidelity to the Church's great tradition, to its faith, and

unconditional openness to all the challenges of this world.”

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