

What was Opus Dei before it became a prelature? How did the 1950 statutes differ from the present ones?

From its foundation on October 2, 1928, Opus Dei was already in essence, although in an embryonic state, the same as we see it today: a part of the Church, made up of faithful and structured hierarchically around a head who was at first the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, a priest.

11/27/2007

From its foundation on October 2, 1928, Opus Dei was already in essence, although in an embryonic state, the same as we see it today: a part of the Church, made up of faithful and structured hierarchically around a head who was at first the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, a priest. This universal ecclesial reality naturally needed to be recognized by the Church, and the Holy See needed to intervene in order to configure it as an hierarchical structure. This was a long process, which is understandable since it was such a new reality in the life of the Church.

Before being erected as a personal prelature, which is the juridical figure that fully accords with the reality of Opus Dei, it had been approved as a secular institute. This

gave recognition to the fact that all of its faithful, both priests and laity, belonged to the same ecclesial reality, and endowed the priest who acted as its head with a certain power. The statutes of 1950 faithfully represented the reality of Opus Dei, but since they had to correspond to the figure of a secular institute, they contained elements unsuited to the secular reality proper to the charism of Opus Dei. These elements disappeared in its statutes as a prelature.

pdf | document generated automatically from <https://opusdei.org/en-us/article/what-was-opus-dei-before-it-became-a-prelature-how-did-the-1950-statutes-differ-from-the-present-ones/> (02/02/2026)