

= Opus Dei =

Opus Dei , formally known as The Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei (Latin : Praelatura Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei) , is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church that teaches that everyone is called to holiness and that ordinary life is a path to sanctity . The majority of its membership are lay people , with secular priests under the governance of a prelate (bishop) elected by specific members and appointed by the Pope . Opus Dei is Latin for " Work of God " ; hence the organization is often referred to by members and supporters as the Work .

Founded in Spain in 1928 by the Catholic saint and priest Josemaría Escrivá , Opus Dei was given final Catholic Church approval in 1950 by Pope Pius XII . In 1982 , by the apostolic constitution *Ut sit* , St. John Paul II made it a personal prelate ? that is , the jurisdiction of its own bishop covers the persons in Opus Dei wherever they are , rather than geographical dioceses .

As of 2015 , members of the Prelature numbered 93 @, @ 986 . Lay persons , men and women , numbered 91 @, @ 020 while there were 2 @, @ 094 priests . These figures do not include the diocesan priest members of Opus Dei 's Priestly Society of the Holy Cross , estimated to number 2 @, @ 000 in the year 2005 . Members are in more than 90 countries . About 70 percent of Opus Dei members live in their private homes , leading traditional Catholic family lives with secular careers , while the other 30 per cent are celibate , of whom the majority live in Opus Dei centres . Opus Dei organizes training in Catholic spirituality applied to daily life . Aside from personal charity and social work , Opus Dei members are involved in running universities , university residences , schools , publishing houses , and technical and agricultural training centers .

Opus Dei has been described as the most controversial force within the Catholic Church . According to several journalists who researched Opus Dei separately , many criticisms against Opus Dei are based on fabrications by opponents , and Opus Dei is considered a sign of contradiction . Several popes and other Catholic leaders have endorsed what they see as its innovative teaching on the sanctifying value of work , and its fidelity to Catholic beliefs . In 2002 , Pope John Paul II canonized Escrivá , and called him " the saint of ordinary life . " Criticism of Opus Dei has centered on allegations of secretiveness , controversial recruiting methods , strict rules governing members , elitism and misogyny , and support of or participation in authoritarian or right @-@ wing governments , especially the Francoist Government of Spain until 1978 . The mortification of the flesh practiced by some of its members is also criticized . Within the Catholic Church , Opus Dei is also criticized for allegedly seeking independence and more influence . In recent years , Opus Dei has received international attention due to the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film version of 2006 , both of which prominent Christians and non @-@ believers criticized as misleading , inaccurate and anti @-@ Catholic .

= = History = =

= = Foundational period = =

Opus Dei was founded by a Catholic priest , Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer , on 2 October 1928 in Madrid , Spain . According to Escrivá , on that day he experienced a vision in which he " saw Opus Dei " . He gave the organization the name " Opus Dei " , which in Latin means " Work of God " , in order to underscore the belief that the organization was not his (Escrivá 's) work , but was rather God 's work . Throughout his life , Escrivá held that the founding of Opus Dei had a supernatural character . Escrivá summarized Opus Dei 's mission as a way of helping ordinary Christians " to understand that their life ... is a way of holiness and evangelization ... And to those who grasp this ideal of holiness , the Work offers the spiritual assistance and training they need to put it into practice . "

Initially , Opus Dei was open only to men , but in 1930 , Escrivá started to admit women , based on what he believed to be a communication from God . In 1936 , the organization suffered a temporary setback with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War , as many Catholic priests and religious figures ,

including Escrivá , were forced into hiding (the Catholic Church actively supported the Nationalist rebels) . The many atrocities committed during the civil war included the murder and rape of religious figures by anti @-@ Franco Anarchists . After the civil war was won by General Francisco Franco , Escrivá was able to return to Madrid . Escrivá himself recounted that it was in Spain where Opus Dei found " the greatest difficulties " because of traditionalists who he felt misunderstood Opus Dei 's ideas . Despite this , Opus Dei flourished during the years of the Franquismo , spreading first throughout Spain , and after 1945 , expanding internationally .

In 1939 , Escrivá published *The Way* , a collection of 999 maxims concerning spirituality for people involved in secular affairs . In the 1940s , Opus Dei found an early critic in the Jesuit Superior General Włodimir Ledóchowski , who told the Vatican that he considered Opus Dei " very dangerous for the Church in Spain , " citing its " secretive character " and calling it " a form of Christian Masonry . "

In 1947 , a year after Escrivá moved the organization 's headquarters to Rome , Opus Dei received a decree of praise and approval from Pope Pius XII , making it an institute of " pontifical right " , i.e. under the direct governance of the Pope . In 1950 , Pius XII granted definitive approval to Opus Dei , thereby allowing married people to join the organisation , and secular clergy to be admitted to the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross .

= = = Post @-@ foundational years = = =

In 1975 , Escrivá died and was succeeded by Álvaro del Portillo . In 1982 , Opus Dei was made into a personal prelature . This means that Opus Dei is part of the universal Church , and the apostolate of the members falls under the direct jurisdiction of the Prelate of Opus Dei wherever they are . As to " what the law lays down for all the ordinary faithful " , the lay members of Opus Dei , being no different from other Catholics , " continue to be ... under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop " , in the words of John Paul II 's *Ut Sit* . In 1994 , Javier Echevarría became Prelate upon the death of his predecessor .

One @-@ third of the world 's bishops sent letters petitioning for the canonization of Escrivá . Escrivá was beatified in 1992 in the midst of controversy prompted by questions about Escrivá 's suitability for sainthood . In 2002 , approximately 300 @,@ 000 people gathered in St. Peter 's Square on the day Pope John Paul II canonised Josemaría Escrivá . According to one author , " Escrivá is ... venerated by millions " .

There are other members whose process of beatification has been opened : Ernesto Cofiño , a father of five children and a pioneer in paediatric research in Guatemala ; Montserrat Grases , a teenage Catalan student who died of cancer ; Toni Zweifel , a Swiss engineer ; Tomás Alvira and wife , Paquita Domínguez , a Spanish married couple ; Isidoro Zorzano , an Argentinian engineer ; Dora del Hoyo , a domestic worker ; and Father José Luis Múzquiz de Miguel .

During the pontificate of John Paul II , two members of Opus Dei , Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne and Julián Herranz Casado , were made cardinals .

In September 2005 , Pope Benedict XVI blessed a newly installed statue of Josemaría Escrivá placed in an outside wall niche of St Peter 's Basilica , a place for founders of Catholic organisations .

During that same year , Opus Dei received some unwanted attention due to the extraordinary success of the novel *The Da Vinci Code* , in which both Opus Dei and the Catholic Church itself are depicted negatively . The film version was released globally in May 2006 , further polarising views on the organisation .

In 2014 , Pope Francis through a delegate beatified Alvaro del Portillo and said that " he teaches us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our life we can find a sure path to holiness .

At the end of 2014 , the prelature has been established in 69 countries , while its members are present in 90 countries .

= = Spirituality = =

== Doctrine ==

Opus Dei is an organisation of the Catholic Church . As such , it shares the doctrines of the Catholic Church and has " no other teaching than the teaching of the Magisterium of the Holy See " , as per the founder .

Opus Dei places special emphasis on certain aspects of Catholic doctrine . A central feature of Opus Dei 's theology is its focus on the lives of the ordinary Catholics who are neither priests nor monks . Opus Dei emphasises the " universal call to holiness " : the belief that everyone should aspire to be a saint , as per Jesus ' commandment to " Love God with all your heart " (Matthew 22 : 37) and " Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect . " (Matthew 5 : 48) Opus Dei also teaches that sanctity is within the reach of everyone , not just a few special individuals , given Jesus ' teaching that his demands are " easy " and " light , " as his divine assistance is assured . (Matthew 11 : 28 ? 30)

Opus Dei does not have monks or nuns , and only a minority of its members are priests . Opus Dei emphasizes uniting spiritual life with professional , social , and family life . Members of Opus Dei lead ordinary lives , with traditional families and secular careers , and strive to " sanctify ordinary life " . Indeed , Pope John Paul II called Escrivá " the saint of ordinary life " .

Similarly , Opus Dei stresses the importance of work and professional competence . While some religious institutes encourage their members to withdraw from the material world , Opus Dei exhorts its members and all lay Catholics to " find God in daily life " and to perform their work excellently as a service to society and as a fitting offering to God . Opus Dei teaches that work not only contributes to social progress but is " a path to holiness " , and its founder advised people to : " Sanctify your work . Sanctify yourself in your work . Sanctify others through your work . "

The biblical roots of this Catholic doctrine , according to the founder , are in the phrase " God created man to work " (Gen 2 : 15) and Jesus 's long life as an ordinary carpenter in a small town . Escrivá , who stressed the Christian 's duty to follow Christ 's example , also points to the gospel account that Jesus " has done everything well " (Mk 7 : 37) .

The foundation of the Christian life , stressed Escrivá , is divine filiation : Christians are children of God , identified with Christ 's life and mission . Other main features of Opus Dei , according to its official literature , are : freedom , respecting choice and taking personal responsibility ; and charity , love of God above all and love of others .

At the bottom of Escrivá 's understanding of the " universal call to holiness " are two dimensions , subjective and objective , according to Fernando Ocariz , a Catholic theologian and Vicar General of Opus Dei . The subjective is the call given to each person to become a saint , regardless of his place in society . The objective refers to what Escrivá calls Christian materialism : all of creation , even the most material situation , is a meeting place with God , and leads to union with Him .

Different qualifiers have been used to describe Opus Dei 's doctrine : radical , reactionary , faithful , revolutionary , ultraconservative , most modern , conservative. and liberal .

== Prayers ==

All members ? whether married or unmarried , priests or laypeople ? are trained to follow a ' plan of life ' , or ' the norms of piety ' , which are some traditional Catholic devotions . This is meant to follow the teaching of the Catholic Catechism : " pray at specific times ... to nourish continual prayer , " which in turn is based on Jesus ' " pray at all times " (Luke 18 : 1) , echoed by St. Paul 's " pray without ceasing " (1 Thessalonians 5 : 17) . According to Escriva , the vocation to Opus Dei is a calling to be a " contemplative in the middle of the world , " who converts work and daily life into prayer .

Daily norms :

Heroic minute , waking up punctually and saying " Serviam ! " (Latin : I will serve)

Morning offering , fixing one 's intentions to do everything for the glory of God

Spiritual reading and reading the New Testament , a practice recommended by St. Paul and other

saints

Mental prayer , conversation with God

Mass , Communion and Thanksgiving after Communion

Rosary , a traditional Catholic devotion to Christ and to Mary

The Preces (the common prayer of Opus Dei)

Angelus , a Marian prayer which recalls Christian belief in God 's becoming man

Memorare prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary offered for the Opus Dei member in most need at that exact moment

Visit to the Blessed Sacrament , a Catholic practice of greeting Jesus in the Eucharist

Examination of conscience at the end of the day

Three Hail Marys before bed to pray for the virtue of purity

Short , spontaneous prayers throughout the day , offering up to God one 's work , sufferings etc .

Weekly norms :

Confession , in pursuit of the Catholic recommendation on frequent confession

a group meeting of spiritual formation (" the Circle ")

the praying of a Marian antiphon on Saturdays

making Psalm 2 the basis of mental prayer on Tuesdays

making the Adoro te devote the basis of mental prayer on Thursdays

Additionally , members should participate yearly in a spiritual retreat ; a three @-@ week seminar every year is obligatory for numeraries , and a one @-@ week seminar for supernumeraries . Also members are expected to make a day @-@ trip pilgrimage where they recite 3 5 @-@ decade rosaries on the month of May in honour of Mary .

= = = Mortification = = =

Much public attention has focused on Opus Dei 's practice of mortification ? the voluntary offering up of discomfort or pain to God ; this includes fasting , or in some circumstances self @-@ inflicted pain such as self @-@ flagellation . Mortification has a long history in many world religions , including the Catholic Church . It has been endorsed by Popes as a way of following Christ , who died in a bloody crucifixion and who gave this advice : " let him deny himself , take up his cross daily and follow me . " (Lk 9 : 23) Supporters say that opposition to mortification is rooted in having lost (1) the " sense of the enormity of sin " or offense against God , and the consequent penance , both interior and exterior , (2) the notions of " wounded human nature " and of concupiscence or inclination to sin , and thus the need for " spiritual battle , " and (3) a spirit of sacrifice for love and " supernatural ends , " and not only for physical enhancement .

As a spirituality for ordinary people , Opus Dei focuses on performing sacrifices pertaining to normal duties and to its emphasis on charity and cheerfulness . Additionally , Opus Dei celibate members practise " corporal mortifications " such as sleeping without a pillow or sleeping on the floor , fasting or remaining silent for certain hours during the day .

= = Organization and activities = =

= = = Governance = = =

In Pope John Paul II 's 1982 decree known as the Apostolic constitution Ut Sit , Opus Dei was established as a personal prelature , a new official structure of the Catholic Church , similar to a diocese in that it contains lay people and secular priests who are led by a bishop . However , whereas a bishop normally has a territory or diocese , the prelate of Opus Dei is pastor to the members and priests of Opus Dei worldwide , no matter what diocese they are in . To date , Opus Dei is the only personal prelature in existence . In addition to being governed by Ut Sit and by the Catholic Church 's general law , Opus Dei is governed by the Church 's Particular Law concerning Opus Dei , otherwise known as Opus Dei 's statutes . This specifies the objectives and workings of

the prelature . The prelature is under the Congregation for Bishops .

The head of the Opus Dei prelature is known as the Prelate . The Prelate is the primary governing authority and is assisted by two councils ? the General Council (made up of men) and the Central Advisory (made up of women) . The Prelate holds his position for life . The current prelate of Opus Dei is Javier Echevarría Rodríguez , who became the second Prelate of Opus Dei in 1994 . The first Prelate of Opus Dei was Álvaro del Portillo , who held the position from 1982 until his death in 1994 .

Opus Dei 's highest assembled bodies are the General Congresses , which are usually convened once every eight years . There are separate congresses for the men and women 's branch of Opus Dei . The General Congresses are made up of members appointed by the Prelate , and are responsible for advising him about the prelature 's future . The men 's General Congress also elects the Prelate from a list of candidates chosen by their female counterparts . After the death of a Prelate , a special elective General Congress is convened . The women nominate their preferred candidates for the prelate and is voted upon by the men to become the next Prelate ? an appointment that must be confirmed by the Pope .

== Membership ==

Based on the language of Catholic Church law and theology , the prelature calls the people under the pastoral care of the prelate as " faithful of the prelature " , since the term member connotes an association rather than a hierarchical structure such as a prelature or a diocese .

As of 2015 , the faithful of the Opus Dei Prelature numbered 93 @, @ 986 of which 91 @, @ 892 are lay persons , men and women , and 2094 priests . These figures do not include the priest members of Opus Dei 's Priestly Society of the Holy Cross , estimated to number 2 @, @ 000 in the year 2005 .

About 60 per cent of Opus Dei faithful reside in Europe , and 35 per cent reside in the Americas . According to the study of John Allen , for the most part , Opus Dei faithful belong to the middle to low levels in society , in terms of education , income , and social status .

Opus Dei is made up of several different types of faithful :

Supernumeraries , the largest type , currently account for about 70 % of the total membership . Typically , supernumeraries are married men and women with careers . Supernumeraries devote a portion of their day to prayer , in addition to attending regular meetings and taking part in activities such as retreats . Due to their career and family obligations , supernumeraries are not as available to the organisation as the other types of faithful , but they typically contribute financially to Opus Dei , and they lend other types of assistance as their circumstances permit .

Numeraries , the second largest type of the faithful of Opus Dei , comprise about 20 % of total membership . Numeraries are celibate members who usually live in special centers run by Opus Dei . Both men and women may become numeraries , although the centers are strictly gender @-@ segregated . Numeraries generally have careers and devote the bulk of their income to the organisation .

Numerary assistants are unmarried , celibate female faithful of Opus Dei . They live in special centres run by Opus Dei but do not have jobs outside the centres ? instead , their professional life is dedicated to looking after the domestic needs of the centers and their residents .

Associates are unmarried , celibate faithful who typically have family or professional obligations . Unlike numeraries and numerary assistants , the associates do not live in Opus Dei centres .

The Clergy of the Opus Dei Prelature are priests who are under the jurisdiction of the Prelate of Opus Dei . They are a minority in Opus Dei ? only about 2 % of Opus Dei members are part of the clergy . Typically , they are numeraries or associates who ultimately joined the priesthood .

The Priestly Society of the Holy Cross consists of priests associated with Opus Dei . Part of the society is made up of the clergy of the Opus Dei prelature ? priests who fall under the jurisdiction of the Opus Dei prelature are automatically members of the Priestly Society . Other members in the society are diocesan priests ? clergymen who remain under the jurisdiction of a geographically defined diocese . These priests are considered full members of Opus Dei who are given its spiritual

training . They do not however report to the Opus Dei Prelate but to their own diocesan bishop . As of 2005 , there were roughly two thousand of these priests .

The Cooperators of Opus Dei are non @-@ members who collaborate in some way with Opus Dei ? usually through praying , charitable contributions , or by providing some other assistance . Cooperators are not required to be celibate or to adhere to any other special requirements . Indeed , cooperators are not even required to be Christian . There were 164 @, @ 000 cooperators in the year 2005 .

In accordance with Catholic theology , membership is granted when a vocation , or divine calling is presumed to have occurred .

= = = Activities = = =

Leaders of Opus Dei describe the organization as a teaching entity whose main activity is to train Catholics to assume personal responsibility in sanctifying the secular world from within . This teaching is done by means of theory and practice .

Its lay people and priests organize seminars , workshops , retreats , and classes to help people put the Christian faith into practice in their daily lives . Spiritual direction , one @-@ on @-@ one coaching with a more experienced lay person or priest , is considered the " paramount means " of training . Through these activities they provide religious instruction (doctrinal formation) , coaching in spirituality for lay people (spiritual formation) , character and moral education (human formation) , lessons in sanctifying one 's work (professional formation) , and know @-@ how in evangelizing one 's family and workplace (apostolic formation) .

The official Catholic document which established the prelature states that Opus Dei strives " to put into practice the teaching of the universal call to sanctity , and to promote at all levels of society the sanctification of ordinary work , and by means of ordinary work . " Thus , the founder and his followers describe members of Opus Dei as resembling the members of the early Christian Church ? ordinary workers who seriously sought holiness with nothing exterior to distinguish them from other citizens .

Opus Dei runs residential centres throughout the world . These centers provide residential housing for celibate members , and provide doctrinal and theological education . Opus Dei is also responsible for a variety of non @-@ profit institutions called " Corporate Works of Opus Dei " . A study of the year 2005 , showed that members have cooperated with other people in setting up a total of 608 social initiatives : schools and university residences (68 %) , technical or agricultural training centres (26 %) , universities , business schools and hospitals (6 %) . The University of Navarra in Pamplona , Spain is a corporate work of Opus Dei which has been rated as one of the top private universities in the country , while its business school , IESE , was adjudged one of the best in the world by the Financial Times and the Economist Intelligence Unit . The total assets of non @-@ profits connected to Opus Dei are worth at least \$ 2 @. @ 8 billion .

= = Relations with Catholic leaders = =

Leopoldo Eijo y Garay , the bishop of Madrid where Opus Dei was born , supported Opus Dei and defended it in the 1940s by saying that " this opus is truly Dei " (this work is truly God 's) . Contrary to attacks of secrecy and heresy , the bishop described Opus Dei 's founder as someone who is " open as a child " and " most obedient to the Church hierarchy . "

In the 1950s , Pope Pius XII told the most senior Australian bishop , Cardinal Norman Gilroy that Escriva " is a true saint , a man sent by God for our times " . Pius XII gave Opus Dei the canonical status of " pontifical right " , an institution depending directly and exclusively on the Vatican in its internal governance .

In 1960 , Pope John XXIII commented that Opus Dei opens up " unsuspected horizons of apostolate " . Furthermore , in 1964 , Pope Paul VI praised the organization in a handwritten letter to Escrivá , saying :

Opus Dei is " a vigorous expression of the perennial youth of the Church , fully open to the

demands of a modern apostolate ... We look with paternal satisfaction on all that Opus Dei has achieved and is achieving for the kingdom of God , the desire of doing good that guides it , the burning love for the Church and its visible head that distinguishes it , and the ardent zeal for souls that impels it along the arduous and difficult paths of the apostolate of presence and witness in every sector of contemporary life . "

The relationship between Paul VI and Opus Dei , according to Alberto Moncada , a doctor of sociology and ex @-@ member , was " stormy " . After the Second Vatican Council concluded in 1965 , Pope Paul VI denied Opus Dei 's petition to become a personal prelature , Moncada stated .

Pope John Paul I , a few years before his election , wrote that Escrivá was more radical than other saints who taught about the universal call to holiness . While others emphasized monastic spirituality applied to lay people , for Escrivá " it is the material work itself which must be turned into prayer and sanctity " , thus providing a lay spirituality .

Criticisms against Opus Dei have prompted Catholics like Piers Paul Read and Vittorio Messori to call Opus Dei a sign of contradiction , in reference to the biblical quote of Jesus as a " sign that is spoken against . " Said John Carmel Heenan , Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster : " One of the proofs of God 's favour is to be a sign of contradiction . Almost all founders of societies in the Church have suffered . Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer is no exception . Opus Dei has been attacked and its motives misunderstood . In this country and elsewhere an inquiry has always vindicated Opus Dei . "

One of Opus Dei 's most prominent supporters was Pope John Paul II . John Paul II cited Opus Dei 's aim of sanctifying secular activities as a " great ideal . " He emphasized that Escrivá 's founding of Opus Dei was ductus divina inspiratione , led by divine inspiration , and he granted the organisation its status as a personal prelature . Stating that Escrivá is " counted among the great witnesses of Christianity , " John Paul II canonized him in 2002 , and called him " the saint of ordinary life . " Of the organisation , John Paul II said :

" [Opus Dei] has as its aim the sanctification of one 's life , while remaining within the world at one 's place of work and profession : to live the Gospel in the world , while living immersed in the world , but in order to transform it , and to redeem it with one 's personal love for Christ . This is truly a great ideal , which right from the beginning has anticipated the theology of the lay state of the Second Vatican Council and the post @-@ conciliar period . "

One @-@ third of the world 's bishops petitioned for the canonisation of Escrivá . During the canonisation , there were 42 cardinals and 470 bishops from around the world , generals superior of many religious institutes , and representatives of various Catholic groups . During those days , these Church officials commented on the universal reach and validity of the message of the founder . For his canonisation homily , John Paul II said : With the teachings of St. Josemaría , " it is easier to understand what the Second Vatican Council affirmed : ' there is no question , then , of the Christian message inhibiting men from building up the world ... on the contrary it is an incentive to do these very things ' (Vatican II , Gaudium et spes , n . 34) . "

Concerning the group 's role in the Catholic Church , critics have argued that Opus Dei 's unique status as a personal prelature gives it too much independence , making it essentially a " church within a church " and that Opus Dei exerts a disproportionately large influence within the Catholic Church itself , as illustrated , for example , by the unusually rapid canonisation of Escrivá , which some considered to be irregular . In contrast , Catholic officials say that Church authorities have even greater control of Opus Dei now that its head is a prelate appointed by the Pope , and its status as a prelature " precisely means dependence . " Allen says that Escrivá 's relatively quick canonization does not have anything to do with power but with improvements in procedures and John Paul II 's decision to make Escrivá 's sanctity and message known .

Pope Benedict XVI has been a particularly strong supporter of Opus Dei and of Escrivá . Pointing to the name " Work of God " , Benedict XVI (then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) , wrote that " The Lord simply made use of [Escrivá] who allowed God to work . " Ratzinger cited Escrivá for correcting the mistaken idea that holiness is reserved to some extraordinary people who are completely different from ordinary sinners : Even if he can be very weak , with many mistakes in his life , a saint is nothing other than to speak with God as a friend speaks with a friend , allowing God to work , the

Only One who can really make the world both good and happy .

Ratzinger spoke of Opus Dei 's " surprising union of absolute fidelity to the Church 's great tradition , to its faith , and unconditional openness to all the challenges of this world , whether in the academic world , in the field of work , or in matters of the economy , etc . " He further explained :

" the theocentrism of Escrivá ... means this confidence in the fact that God is working now and we ought only to put ourselves at his disposal ... This , for me , is a message of greatest importance . It is a message that leads to overcoming what could be considered the great temptation of our times : the pretense that after the ' Big Bang ' God retired from history . "

Pope Francis is " the first Pope who has dealt with Opus Dei closely as a bishop " , and according to James V. Schall , S.J. , is a " friend of Opus Dei . " Francis referred to St. Josemaria as " a precursor of Vatican II in proposing the universal call to holiness . " In the analysis of John Allen , Pope Francis ' strong dislike for clericalism , which he calls " one of the worst evils " in the Church is a key factor for " what Francis admires about Opus Dei , since Escrivá ' s emphasis on the dignity of the laity was a challenge to the ultra @-@ clerical ethos of Spanish Catholicism in the late 1920s . " He has a devotion to St. Josemaria , and he prayed before his relics for 45 minutes , when he once visited the church of the prelature in Rome . Francis beatified Alvaro del Portillo , the successor of Escrivá . What Bergoglio most liked about Opus Dei was the work done for the poor by one of its schools in Buenos Aires . He thanks Opus Dei for its work to further the holiness of priests in the Roman Curia .

= = Controversy = =

Throughout its history , Opus Dei has been criticized from many quarters , prompting journalists to describe Opus Dei as " the most controversial force in the Catholic Church " and founder Saint Josemaría Escrivá as a " polarizing " figure .

The organisation has been criticized for issues relating to the Catholic Church , especially the practice of mortification of the flesh . Controversies about Opus Dei have centered around criticisms of its behaviours , such as alleged secretiveness , aggressive recruiting methods , and its strict rules governing members . The organization 's members have also been categorized by critics as right @-@ leaning elitists , with some individuals supporting fascist governments , such as the Francoist Government of Spain until 1978 .

= = = Supporting views = = =

According to several journalists who have worked independently on Opus Dei , such as John Allen , Jr . , Vittorio Messori , Patrice de Plunkett , Maggy Whitehouse , Noam Friedlander many of the criticisms against Opus Dei are myths and unproven tales . Allen , Messori , and Plunkett say that most of these myths were created by its opponents , with Allen adding that he perceives that Opus Dei members generally practise what they preach .

Allen , Messori , and Plunkett also state that accusations that Opus Dei is secretive are unfounded . These accusations stem from a clerical paradigm which expects Opus Dei members to behave as monks and clerics , people who are traditionally known and externally identifiable as seekers of holiness . In contrast , these journalists continue , Opus Dei 's lay members , like any normal Catholic professional , are ultimately responsible for their personal actions , and do not externally represent the organization which provides them religious education . Writer and broadcast analyst John L. Allen , Jr. states that Opus Dei provides abundant information about itself . These journalists have stated that the historic roots of criticisms against Opus Dei can be found in influential clerical circles .

As to its alleged participation in right @-@ wing politics , especially the Francoist regime , British historians Paul Preston and Brian Crozier state that the Opus Dei members who were Franco 's ministers were appointed for their talent and not for their Opus Dei membership . Also , there were notable members of Opus Dei who were vocal critics of the Franco Regime such as Rafael Calvo Serer and Antonio Fontán , who was the first President of the Senate in Spain , following the

adoption of a democratic Constitution . The German historian and Opus Dei member Peter Berglar calls any connection made between Opus Dei and Franco 's regime a " gross slander . " At the end of Franco 's regime , Opus Dei members were 50 : 50 for and against Franco , according to John Allen . Similarly Álvaro del Portillo , the former Prelate of Opus Dei , said that any statements that Escrivá supported Hitler were " a patent falsehood , " that were part of " a slanderous campaign " . He and others have stated that Escrivá condemned Hitler as a " rogue " , a " racist " and a " tyrant " . Opus Dei spokespersons also deny claims that Opus Dei members worked with General Pinochet . Various authors state that Escrivá was staunchly non @-@ political , and detested dictatorships . Allen wrote that , compared with other Catholic organizations , Opus Dei 's stress on freedom and personal responsibility is extraordinarily strong . There are many Opus Dei members who are identified with left @-@ wing politics , including Ruth Kelly , Jorge Rossi Chavarría and Jesus Estanislao .

While Opus Dei spokespersons have admitted mistakes in dealing with some members and do not , as a rule , contest their grievances , supporters have rejected generalisations merely based on negative experiences of some members . Sociologists like Bryan R. Wilson write about some former members of any religious group who may have psychological motivations such as self @-@ justification to criticise their former groups . Wilson states that such individuals are prone to create fictitious " atrocity stories " which have no basis in reality . Many supporters of Opus Dei have expressed the belief that the criticisms of Opus Dei stem from a generalised disapproval of spirituality , Christianity , or Catholicism . Expressing this sentiment , one Opus Dei member , Cardinal Julián Herranz , stated " Opus Dei has become a victim of Christianophobia . " Massimo Introvigne , author of an encyclopedia of religion , argues that critics employ the term " cult " in order to intentionally stigmatize Opus Dei because " they could not tolerate ' the return to religion ' of the secularized society " .

Opus Dei is not " elitist " in the sense in which people often invoke the term , meaning an exclusively white @-@ collar phenomenon , concluded John Allen . He observed that among its members are barbers , bricklayers , mechanics and fruit sellers . Most supernumeraries are living ordinary middle @-@ class lives , he said .

Regarding alleged misogyny , John Allen states that half of the leadership positions in Opus Dei are held by women , and they supervise men . The Catholic Church defends its male priesthood by saying that " the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ministers but the saints . "

== Critical views ==

In the English @-@ speaking world there is an internet @-@ based blogging website called the Opus Dei Awareness Network (ODAN) whose Web page is sub @-@ headed " Bringing light to Opus Dei 's Questionable Practices " . Critics of Opus Dei include María del Carmen Tapia , an ex @-@ member who was a high @-@ ranking officer of Opus Dei for many years , liberal Catholic theologians such as Fr . James Martin , a Jesuit writer and editor , and supporters of Liberation theology , such as journalist Penny Lernoux and Michael Walsh , a writer on religious matters and former Jesuit .

Critics state that Opus Dei is " intensely secretive " ? for example , members generally do not disclose their affiliation with Opus Dei in public . Further , under the 1950 constitution , members were expressly forbidden to reveal themselves without the permission of their superiors . This practice has led to much speculation about who may be a member .

Opus Dei has been accused of deceptive and aggressive recruitment practices such as showering potential members with intense praise (" Love bombing ") , and instructing numeraries to form friendships and attend social gatherings explicitly for recruiting purposes .

Critics allege that Opus Dei maintains an extremely high degree of control over its members ? for instance , past rules required numeraries to submit their incoming and outgoing mail to their superiors for inspection , and members are forbidden to read certain books without permission from their superiors . Critics charge that Opus Dei pressures numeraries to sever contact with non @-@ members , including their own families . Exit counselor David Clark has described Opus Dei as "

very cult @-@ like " .

Critics assert that Escrivá and the organisation supported radical right @-@ wing governments , such as those of Franco , Augusto Pinochet and Alberto Fujimori of Peru during the 1990s . Both Pinochet 's and Fujimori 's ministries and prominent supporters allegedly included members of Opus Dei , but there are also prominent Opus Dei members in parties that opposed those governments . Likewise , among Opus Dei members there were also strong detractors of Franco , such as Antonio Fontán . There have also been allegations that Escrivá expressed sympathy for Adolf Hitler . One former Opus Dei priest , Vladimir Felzmann , who has become a vocal Opus Dei critic , says that Escrivá once remarked that Hitler had been " badly treated " by the world and he further declared that " Hitler couldn 't have been such a bad person . He couldn 't have killed six million [Jews] . It couldn 't have been more than four million . "

Opus Dei has also been accused of elitism through targeting of " the intellectual elite , the well @-@ to @-@ do , and the socially prominent . "

As a part of the Roman Catholic Church , Opus Dei has been open to the same criticisms as Catholicism in general ? for example female members of Opus Dei cannot become priests or prelates . Specifically , Opus Dei 's position has been " to oppose sexual freedoms and promote conservative morals , " according to an investigative report produced by the advocacy group Catholics for Choice The report further cites a study from sociologist Marco Burgos alleging Opus Dei interference in sex education programs in Honduras .

After conducting a critical study of Opus Dei , journalist John L. Allen , Jr. concluded that Opus Dei should (1) be more transparent , (2) collaborate with members of religious institutes , and (3) encourage its members to air out in public their criticisms of the institution .

= = = Other views = = =

Sociologists Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington suggest that Opus Dei is involved in " a deliberate attempt to construct an alternative modernity , " one that engages modern culture while at the same time is resolutely loyal to Catholic traditions . Van Biema of Time magazine emphasises Opus Dei 's Spanish roots as a source of misunderstandings in the Anglo @-@ Saxon world , and suggests that as the United States becomes more Hispanic , controversies about Opus Dei (and similar Catholic organizations) will decrease .

In her 2006 book on Opus Dei , Maggy Whitehouse , a non @-@ Catholic journalist , argues that the relative autonomy of each director and centre has resulted in mistakes at the local level . She recommends greater consistency and transparency for Opus Dei , which she sees as having learned the lesson of greater openness when it faced the issues raised by The Da Vinci Code and other critics .

= = Members proposed for Beatification = =

Aside from Escriva (canonized in 2002) and Alvaro del Portillo (beatified in 2014) , there a number of members of Opus Dei who have been proposed for beatification :

Toni Zweifel

Ernesto Cofiño

Tomas Alvira

Francisca " Paquita " Dominguez

Laura Busca Otaegui . Laura was born on November 3 , 1918 in Zumarraga , Guipuzcoa , Spain . She was married to Eduardo Ortiz de Landazuri Fernandez de Heredia and became a mother of seven . She has a degree in pharmacology and a great love for study and reading . After a long illness , she died in Pamplona , with a reputation for sanctity , on October 11 , 2000 . The Archbishop of Pamplona opened her Cause of Canonization on June 14 , 2013 . Together with her husband they are honored as " Servants of God " .

Eduardo Ortiz de Landazuri . Born on October 31 , 1910 in Segovia , Spain . He was a doctor , and he died on May 20 , 1985 in Pamplona , Navarra , Spain . His cause for Canonization was opened

by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints , which have given him the Protocol No : 2253 and honored him together with his wife as " Servants of God " on November 3 , 1998 .

Joseph Muzquiz

Montserrat Grases . She was born on July 10 , 1941 in Barcelona , Spain . She died on March 26 , 1959 in Barcelona , Spain . Her cause is now underway to Sainthood . The Congregation for the Causes of Saints had given her the Protocol No : 1137 and she was honored as " Servant of God " .

Maria Encarnacion Ortega Pardo

Jose Maria Hernandez Garnica

Dora del Hoyo . Dora was born on January 11 , 1914 in Boca de Huergano , Leon , Spain . She died on May 20 , 2004 in Rome , Italy . Her Cause for Beatification is now on Preliminary stages .

Guadalupe Ortiz de Landazuri Fernandez de Heredia

Maria Lourdes de Miguel Crespo

Jeremy Joyner White

= = Opus Dei in popular culture = =

Jerry Pournelle 's 1974 Science Fiction story " Enforcer " centers on a fictional coup d 'état in Argentina , whose moving spirit , a Colonel Ortiz , is affiliated to Opus Dei as well as Catholic Action . Though he is the story 's antagonist , Otiz is depicted rather sympathetically as an honest and dedicated officer - who tries (and eventually fails) to defend Argentine sovereignty against a giant multi @-@ national corporation employing the " Enforcer " of the title .

In the 1997 novel The Genesis Code by John Case the leader of Umbra Domini , which is the author 's version of Opus Dei , is portrayed as the novel 's antagonist . In the novel , Umbra Domini members are sent on a mission to execute children who were conceived using genetically engineered oocytes .

In another 1997 book , the detective novel " The Death of Faith " which is the seventh in the Commissario Brunetti series by Donna Leon , the book 's mystery turns out to involve sinister activities by Opus Dei . The book ends with the protagonist Brunetti feeling certain that a priest who is an Opus Dei member was responsible for several murders - but has no way to prove it in court , and feels that Opus Dei is too powerful to touch .

Since 2003 , Opus Dei has received world attention as a result of Dan Brown 's novel The Da Vinci Code and the 2006 film based on the novel . In The Da Vinci Code , Opus Dei is portrayed as a Catholic organization that is led into a sinister international conspiracy . In general , The Da Vinci Code has been sharply criticised for its numerous factual inaccuracies , by a wide array of scholars and historians . According to the Anglican Bishop of Durham , the Rt Rev Dr Tom Wright , the novel is a " great thriller " but " lousy history " . For example , Silas , a major villain in The Da Vinci Code is a monk who is a member of Opus Dei ? but in reality there are no monks in Opus Dei . The Da Vinci Code implies that Opus Dei is the Pope 's personal prelature ? but the term " personal prelature " does not refer to a special relationship to the Pope : It means an institution in which the jurisdiction of the prelate is not linked to a geographic territory but over persons , wherever they be . Nonetheless , Brown stated that his portrayal of Opus Dei was based on interviews with members and ex @-@ members , and books about Opus Dei . An Opus Dei spokesman questioned this statement .

A Franco @-@ Belgian comic book (bande dessinée) on the life of Escrivá was published by Coccinelle BD in 2005 . The title is Through the mountains , in reference to Escriva 's escape from the Republican zone through the mountains of Andorra during the Spanish Civil War .

In the bestselling Ashwin Sanghi thriller The Rozabal Line (2007) , mention of Opus Dei and Illuminati are frequent . Sanghi , often termed the Indian Dan Brown , created an intricate plot revolving around themes of Jesus ' tomb and nuclear bombs and the events , though global , have India as an important theatre .

Camino , a 2008 Spanish film directed by Javier Fesser , allegedly based on the real story of Alexia González @-@ Barros , a girl who died from spinal cancer at fourteen in 1985 and awaits canonisation . Fesser portrays the Opus Dei in a negative way , depicting it as an extreme cult

destroying families , suggesting that Opus Dei manipulated the tragedy of the young Camino 's painful death for its own ends .

There Be Dragons , an historical epic film released in the spring of 2011 , includes the early life of Escrivá . It is directed by Roland Joffé , and stars Charlie Cox , Wes Bentley , Derek Jacobi , Golshifteh Farahani , Dougray Scott , Olga Kurylenko , and Lily Cole .

Damien , a 2016 television series based on The Omen has the organisation .

= = = Opus Dei Official sites = = =

Official website

The founder of Opus Dei : Official Site

Writings of the founder of Opus Dei

St. Josemaría Escrivá Historical Institute , Rome

YouTube Channel ? Opus Dei

YouTube Channel ? St. Josemaria

= = = Sites supporting Opus Dei = = =

The Vatican on Opus Dei and Josemaria Escriva

EWTN page on Opus Dei

Opus Dei Blogs ? central hub of internet sources

page on Opus Dei with forum

= = = Sites critical of Opus Dei = = =

Opus Dei Awareness Network ? by ex @-@ members and family

OpusLibros.org (Spanish) ? by ex @-@ members

Opus Dei in the United States ? by Father James Martin , S.J.