

History of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross

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The founder soon realized that the newness of the spirit of Opus Dei implied the need for priests who would come from its own laymen, who would dedicate themselves in a special way to the pastoral needs of the people of the Work and their apostolates, without excluding other souls (cf. A. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, II, Scepter, 2003, p. 454).

On February 14, 1943, while celebrating Holy Mass, St. Josemaría received a particular light from God that enabled him to find the way to

ordain these faithful of Opus Dei to the priesthood. A body of priests coming from its lay members and formed with its spirit was to be erected within the pastoral reality of the Work, integrated in the institution and with a fully secular condition, for the pastoral care of its members and their apostolates. Thus was born the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, which the bishop of Madrid erected on December 8, 1943, after having received the *nihil obstat* from the Holy See on October 11, 1943.

St. Josemaría had deep in his heart the desire to help more effectively his brothers in the diocesan priesthood. He continued devoting a large part of his time to them, especially after 1939, preaching many retreats to priests throughout the Iberian peninsula at the request of bishops of various dioceses.

Mindful of the needs of his fellow priests, St. Josemaría even considered (in 1948-49) the possibility of leaving Opus Dei, once it was granted final pontifical approval, in order to establish an association for secular priests (cf. Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, III, Scepter, 2005, pp. 125-129).

In April 1950, God enabled the founder to see that it was possible to include in the Work diocesan priests incardinated in various dioceses. Therefore he petitioned the Holy See to approve their inclusion in the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross. This was granted on June 16 of that year.

When St. John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature of international scope on November 28, 1982, the definitive juridical solution was obtained. It reflected the

genuinely secular character of the Work and its organic constitution (made up of priests and laity, and men and women from the most varied professions and social backgrounds). In its Statutes, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross is set forth as an association of clergy properly and intrinsically united to the Prelature, made up of the priests who form the presbyterate of the Prelature (faithful of Opus Dei who have received priestly ordination) and which priests incardinated in the different dioceses can join who want to seek holiness in the exercise of their priestly ministry according to the spirit of Opus Dei.

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