

26 faithful of Opus Dei will be ordained as priests on May 31

Bishop Javier Echevarría, the prelate of Opus Dei, will ordain 26 men to the priesthood on May 31 in Rome. A brief account and an interview with Shohei Kimura of Japan follow.

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The 26 men to be ordained come from 12 different countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Spain, Philippines, France, England, Japan,

Mexico, Nigeria and Peru. Their average age is 35, and their professions prior to being ordained included engineering, philology, data processing, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, actuarial science, and medicine.

The following persons will be ordained: Alexandre Taló Valls, Leonard U. Ogbanufe, Juan Pedro Maldonado, Shohei Kimura, Horacio J. Antúnez, Guilherme Sanches Ximenes, Emilio L. Arizmendi Echecopar, Juan Fco. Montuenga Badía, Orlando G. Beltrán, César Antonio Claudio, Sebastián Urruticoechea Rios, Carlos Durán Múzquiz, Antonio García-Berbel, Carlos García del Barrio, Gregorio J. Gutián Crespo, Pedro Gutiérrez Guindo, José M^a Carrasco Peña, Stéphane Henaux, Borja Dantart Pitarch, Michael Lowenthal, Rafael Martín Bravo, Laurent Mazingi Kadogo, Manuel Miedes Miedes,

Josep Peguera Poch, Albert Ribot
Margarit, Rodrigo Martínez Aceves.

Interview with Shohei Kimura, one of the men to be ordained

Shohei is the eldest Kimura. His name means “tranquil man from a forest town.” His mother became a Catholic when he was eight years old, and four years later he converted also. His father is coming from Japan for the ordination, as well as a group from the Ibaraki parish, led by Fr. Inoue. “Knowing that the Ibaraki parishioners are coming to my ordination is moving for me,” says Shohei. “Due to the persecutions, Ibaraki had many secret Catholics in the 16th to 19th centuries. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to say that I owe my Christian vocation in part to them.”

Was there any crucial point in the road to your vocation?

I was baptized at the age of 12. I am indebted to many people for this event. I would emphasize in the first place both my parents. My mother, who was converted four years before thanks to a friend, prayed the Rosary frequently and I recall that she had a great deal of devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe - I don't know why, but I remember that she had a lot of devotion. It was she who presented me to the priest who began to teach me the catechism.

Also I want to stress the importance of my father, because he is a man who loves freedom. Although he is an atheist and did not want me to convert, he always defended my freedom against some relatives who saw the conversion of my mother and me as a betrayal. My conversion was an even more serious issue as I was the eldest son. Nevertheless, my father always came to my defense. When I began to receive my first

catechism lessons, he said to those who called it a betrayal: “Leave him alone, if the boy wants to convert, he will convert.” My father’s respect for freedom was very important to me.

What memories do you have of those years of catechesis?

I was impressed by the way the parish priest, Fr. Gustaf Banbael of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, came every Saturday to my house to teach me catechism. When he could not come, some nuns whom I sometimes saw in the parish would come. As distance is measured in Japan, the parish was quite far from my house. As a result, Fr. Banbael’s constancy through three years of catechesis impressed me. I will always be very grateful.

When I was 13, my family moved to another neighborhood of Osaka. In that parish I met Fr. Josef Heriban. He was a loving, tranquil Salesian

priest, who conveyed a great deal of peace. I recall this Belgian priest perfectly, because he helped me a lot. He gave me very valuable advice. One day he gave me a book that interested me greatly, and helped me see my professional vocation: to be professor. It was a biography of St. John Bosco. It made me want to lead a life of piety and above all to dedicate my life to teaching. Therefore I went to the university, where I studied English philology. At the university, a friend introduced me to Opus Dei, and I saw that to be in the Work was what God asked me.

What was most worthwhile in those years?

The example of holiness of many priests, who in Japan work in some objectively very difficult circumstances. Fr. Banbael was not an exception. I have known many priests like him. Of all of them, I can

say that I never felt pressured to take any step, but rather felt myself encouraged. I would say that they were saints: marvelous examples of love and sacrifice, an example that attracted me a great deal.

How does the example of the Pope's life influence you?

For me, the example of this Pope is a lesson of love. His example teaches that one should give himself completely to Christ and his Church, and that physical limitations are not an excuse. With his tireless trips to carry Christ to every corner of the world, he tells us to have an open heart to all cultures and nations. It is surprising how he manages to establish a real dialogue with people, with the sick, with the young. When the Pope travels, I think we all travel with him.

You have studied theology in Rome for some years. What can you say about your stay in the eternal city?

One of the things I like most about Rome is the churches. In Japan, a country that is neither Catholic nor Christian, it is different. I like the Christian environment of Rome, because it helps me be more pious. For example, I like visiting the many churches where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed all day. This is a very good thing. Also, one can learn many things in Rome about its history, its people, its art.

You attended the recent canonization of St. Josemaría. What do you find particularly attractive in the life of the founder of Opus Dei?

An event from his life that impresses me a great deal is how he fulfilled his priestly ministry during the Spanish Civil War, in spite of many dangers.

Doing this was the one thing that concerned him. On one of the occasions in which he was about to be killed, convinced of his imminent death, he entrusted himself to God and gave absolution to those who were with him. He recalled years later that, in that moment, though he desired to die for Christ, his legs were trembling. This event is very attractive for me because I come from a land where there have been many martyrs.

How have your friends and relatives reacted to your ordination?

In general well enough. This is due to the fact that professions centered on others are valued greatly in Japan. For example, artisans, professors, etc., are viewed as saints. I recently received three letters from friends, two non-believers and one Catholic, letters of gratitude and

congratulations. They grasp that the profession that I am going to carry out is for others, because a good priest cannot remain doing nothing. Our model is Christ.

Besides, I am very happy that my father is coming to the ordination. I did not expect it. I am also grateful for the effort of two siblings who have decided to come. In Japan is not easy to miss work, and one must make up every last minute. Naturally we will miss my mother, who died 10 years ago. My mother wanted me to become a priest and she prayed for me. She respected me completely, but I recall that occasionally she told me: “Shohei, to be a priest is something very nice and very big.”

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