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Prelate of Opus Dei ordains 26 priests from 12 countries

May the faithful “discover the holy and merciful face of the Redeemer” through you, said Bishop Echevarría to the new priests at the ordination ceremony in the Basilica of San Eugenio in Rome on May 31.

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“I hope those reading these lines will pray for me and for all the new priests, asking that we would be

instruments of happiness, understanding and peace,” said Laurent Mazingi Kadogo. The new “Abbé” Laurent, born in Bukavu-Sud Kivu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 1971, is one of 26 faithful of Opus Dei ordained by Bishop Javier Echevarría. The new priests come from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, England, France, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, and Spain.

Bishop Echevarría: “A mission to be a living, transparent image of Christ.”

In his homily, Bishop Echevarría encouraged the new priests to follow the example of St. Josemaría, “a model of fully priestly existence.” The Prelate told them: “I would like to bring to your recollection one of these significant aspects of St. Josemaría’s life, one that is very closely united to the visible

representation of Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Shepherd, which I entrust to each of you as a mission. What I want to emphasize is the necessity to be, in every moment, a living, transparent image of Christ, in such a way that the faithful – looking at you, listening to your preaching, contemplating your behavior – might discover the holy and merciful face of the Redeemer.”

Directing himself to their families, he added: “Parents and siblings of the new priests, thank our Lord for the affection with which he has distinguished your family. Try to correspond to so much love with the renewal of your Christian life.”

Laurent Mazingi: “The Pope’s whole life is a great lesson”

Commenting on his priestly ordination, Laurent expressed a special gratitude to John Paul II, as the 25th anniversary of his

pontificate approaches. “The Pope’s whole life is a great lesson for me,” he says. “His unconditional gift of himself to the Church and to all persons moves me to be more generous.” The new Congolese priest had the opportunity to greet the Pope recently. “I was still more impressed with the way he knows how to truly love and serve. When he saw me, he immediately said to me: ‘Africa, Africa, peace, the Congo!’ I was touched by these words going out from the Pope’s heart, and it seemed to me a magnificent prayer to elevate to God.”

As for the cruel war that has battered the Congo for years, Laurent affirms that “violence is a road without a future,” and says that he prays every day “for all those who can build peace, that they not elude this urgent task.”

On the five years of theological studies that he has spent in Rome, the Congolese economist, now priest, says that he will take from Rome “a desire for peace, Christian peace, that leads you to know how to forgive and ask pardon. Here I have understood even more that the Church is my family, and that one must love it each day more and serve it unconditionally.”

Two priests at home

One of the Europeans being ordained was Stéphane Hénau, 31, from Poyssy, France. This will be a memorable year for the Hénau family, with two children being ordained as priests. “My brother Pierre Antoine,” explains Stéphane, “is a Benedictine at the monastery of Fontgombault, near Poitiers, and he will be ordained this summer. My parents, who are in Opus Dei, are very happy. Pierre Antoine and I

pray that we may be very faithful to God.”

“Shohei, to be a priest is something very nice and very big”

Another of the new priests is Shohei Kimura, of Osaka, Japan. His father and siblings came 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.”

Commenting on his road to the priesthood, Shohei explains: “I was baptized at the age of 12. I am indebted to many people for this decisive event in my life, but I would emphasize in the first place 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. It was she who presented me to the priest who began to teach me the catechism. My mother died 10 years ago; she wanted me to become a priest and she prayed for me. She respected my freedom completely, but I recall that occasionally she told me: “Shohei, to be a priest is something very nice and very big.”

And, referring to his father, he said: “I owe him a lot, 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 my freedom has been very important to me.”

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