

Interview with Fr. Julio

After studying law at the University of Ottawa, Fr. Julio worked as a lawyer in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 8th in Rome. Following is part one of an interview with Fr. Julio.

2010-06-24

Can you tell us about your family and upbringing?

I was born in St. Louis, USA, a city with a deeply rooted Catholic faith and a great sense of family and immigrant traditions. My parents, who are from Argentina, raised seven children in a wholesome, cheerful home. After high school, I moved to Chicago for university studies, during which time I joined Opus Dei. Subsequently, I left for Canada to attend law school and lived successively in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto, assisting Opus Dei's apostolates in those cities.

The “story” of your call to the priesthood

”Story” is too strong a word in my case, though there was a crucial point in my journey. When I was in Chicago, studying history at Northwestern University, I spent one summer volunteering as a youth counsellor with an inner city sports and academic enrichment program.

Befriending and advising a number of students, generally from families that were struggling economically. I realized that God was asking me to commit my life to service. I started living the spirit of Opus Dei more deeply and intensely, which led to greater happiness and deeper friendships. I also experienced struggles and doubts, as anyone else does, but the confidence that this is God's will kept pushing me gently in this direction. The initial vocational decision to Opus Dei was by no means dramatic, rather it happened through intuitions, graces, small supernatural steps that eventually led to the priestly calling.

You might ask, why it took so long to decide to become a priest. After all, I'm 41 and practiced law before taking this step. The fact is that I didn't take so long to decide, God did. When God entered my life at the age of 19, I discovered my vocation to

Opus Dei. I sensed that God didn't want me to abandon my studies or professional hopes and ambitions, but rather, he wanted me to sanctify myself there where he called me: in my history and law studies, then in legal practice. Thus, I undertook the years ahead, sure of God's will that he wanted me to live the teachings of St. Josemaria on the sanctification of ordinary life.

The specific calling to the priesthood in Opus Dei came by the direct means of the Prelate, who asked me, if I wished, to think about being ordained a priest. After some time in prayer, I responded "yes", freely, knowing that God is not outdone in generosity.

To whom do you owe your priestly vocation?

Obviously, to Our Lord; every vocation comes about through God's infinite mercy. But no doubt he

normally works through many people when he wants to call one of his children to a special dedication.

In my case, the Founder of Opus Dei played a decisive role. But as he said, 90% of our vocation we owe to our parents. In this sense, I am indebted above all to my parents. My mother, who prayed the Rosary frequently, and my father's life of hidden, constant support of the family, were excellent examples of Christian life. I'm also conscious of friendships, both at school and in my years as a professional, that were important in this respect.

Priestly ordination

The ceremony itself / the experience of your ordination

I must admit, I was quite nervous in the days leading up to the May 8th, ordination, but the knowledge that this step is the Lord's will brought

peace and confidence the day of the ceremony.

In the week before our ordination, we all received several classes with the Prelate on how to prepare ourselves interiorly for the sacrament. The Prelate's message was one of service, life of prayer, an increase in Eucharistic piety, and docility to the Holy Spirit. He encouraged us to take seriously the priestly ministry –celebrating the Holy Mass with great piety and preaching the Word of God with docility to the Holy Spirit. In this way, we will exercise the priestly soul in imitation of Jesus, the model for all priests.

Throughout the ordination, we had a really keen sense of how many people all over the world had prayed for us. .

During these moments, I felt a profound gratitude, as well as

unworthiness for the calling: gratitude to everyone, beginning with my parents, who had made constant, hidden sacrifices and offered prayers for me all these years; and unworthiness, in the sense that the vocation to ministry is an undeserved gift and to correspond to it properly, one needs to be emptied of self, allow oneself to be transformed by the love of Jesus Christ.

The following morning, the Prelate met with families and friends, to thank them for being instruments in the vocation of the new priests and to ask them to pray intensely for priestly vocations during this "Year of the Priesthood" convoked by Benedict XVI. I was accompanied by my parents, siblings and numerous friends who came from various cities in Canada, plus a number of canon law colleagues from the Santa Croce.

Being ordained a priest in the year of the priesthood

Obviously this is a year of grace, and I thank God for the “coincidence” of being ordained to the priesthood.

During this special year declared by Pope Benedict XVI, I know that all the faithful around the world are joining their prayers with the Holy Father for priestly vocations and for the sanctity of all priests.

As a result, Catholics everywhere are reflecting more on the common and ministerial priesthood. In my case, ministerial priesthood demands that give I vibrant witness to the love of Christ and His work of Salvation, in a word, to spread the joy of this gift to all the people with whom I have contact.

Besides praying for the holiness of all priests, I am praying for holy families to raise their children with the living example of their Christian life, so

that many young men will learn generosity of spirit in their first years and be more open to God's call to the ministerial priesthood. This is a year dedicated to cheerful service, , both in the liturgy and in teaching or charity.

Above all, I see God's loving hand in calling me in this year of the priesthood with its abundant graces, so that the faithful might discover the Lord's holy and merciful face through my living, transparent image of Christ.

Note: Part Two of this interview can be found here
