

Prelate Celebrates Mass in Valencia's Cathedral

Invited by the Archbishop of Valencia, Bishop Javier Echevarría also gave an address for priests from Valencia during the Year for Priests.

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On February 5, thousands of faithful filled the cathedral of Valencia during the Mass presided over by the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier

Echevarría, in honor of St. Josemaría Escrivá.

Many of the faithful had to stand for the Mass in the side aisles since the pews were filled. To help them follow the liturgy, television screens were installed in various location in the cathedral.

Concelebrating with Bishop Echevarría were Archbishop Carlos Osoro of Valencia, his auxiliary Bishops Esteban Escudero and Enrique Benavent, along with fifteen priests.

Among the officials attending were the third Vice-President of the Province of Valencia, Juan Cotino; the Councillor of the City Government of Valencia, Miguel Dominguez; the President of the Cierval Employers' Association, Rafael Ferrando; and the Rector of the San Vicente Martir Catholic University of Valencia, José Alfredo Peris.

The Prelate of Opus Dei began his homily with the assurance that he bore "deeply engraved in his memory the affection that St. Josemaría had for Valencia." Bishop Echevarría added that the saint "expressed this publicly in 1972 during his last stay among you, when he said that he looked upon Valencia 'with a predilection that is not meant to offend any other city of Spain or outside of Spain.'" The Prelate invited the Valencian faithful to take advantage of "this affection because he is interceding for you from heaven."

For his part, Archbishop Osoro, who said a few words at the beginning of the ceremony, thanked God for "the charism that he gave to the Church through St. Josemaría in the service of all men and women, a charism that has yielded such beautiful fruit for the Church in Valencia, which is

being helped by all the members of the Work."

Conference in Valencia

In the morning before the Mass, Bishop Echevarría also gave an address to priests organized by the St. Vincent Ferrer School of Theology and the Almudi Priests' Library.

Citing reflections of Pope Benedict XVI, he emphasized that the mission of priests in preaching the word of God "is not to voice many words, but to make ourselves an echo and an amplifier of the one 'Word,' which is the Word of God made flesh for our salvation," since "we have not been sent to proclaim ourselves or our personal opinions, but the mystery of Christ."

The Prelate of Opus Dei, who made reference in his talk to examples from the life and teaching of St. Josemaría Escrivá, recalled that

priests should reproduce the Gospel image of the Good Shepherd, who "gave his life for his sheep." Thus, citing words of the Pope, he pointed out that priests should practise charity, be detached from themselves and "be at the disposition of our Lord at every moment, even though other things seem more attractive or important."

"To fulfil oneself as a priest means to be fully united to Christ, to identify oneself with him in the priestly ministry and in all of one's behavior," emphasized the Prelate, who added that "it is a matter of being transparent, so that the faithful see the Master, the Redeemer, without feeling called to fix their eyes on the priest himself."

In this context, Bishop Echevarría cited St. Josemaría, who "opposed the error of those who thought that Christians wanted to see in the priest

just another person. That isn't so. In the priest they want to admire the virtues proper to any Christian, and even to any honorable man: understanding, justice, a life of work —priestly work in this case—charity, education, refinement in dealing with people. But, along with that, the faithful want the priestly character to stand out clearly."

The Prelate also recalled that the diocese of Valencia is a "land that St. Josemaría Escrivá kept very close to his heart." In fact, "this is where the first expansion of Opus Dei took place outside of Madrid, where it was born in 1928." In addition, the founder directed many retreats for priests and "maintained a fraternal friendship with exemplary priests." Among them, he cited the Archbishops Prudencio Melo y Alcalde, José María García Lahiguera and Miguel Roca Cabanelas, as well as Antonio Rodillo, the vicar general

and later rector of the seminary, and the Servant of God Eladio España.

He likewise referred to Joaquín Mestre, secretary of Archbishop Marcelino Olaechea, who was "a witness of the reputation for holiness that the founder of the Work enjoyed during his life." In the canonical process for the beatification of St. Josemaría, Mestre "testified what Don Marcelino had repeated at the end of his life: 'If I die before Don Josemaría, say that I always considered him a saintly priest.'"

The conference of the Prelate of Opus Dei, entitled "Priestly Identity—Priestly Piety" and presented in the La Beneficencia Cultural Center by the Archbishop of Valencia, Most Reverend Carlos Osoro, was included in the framework of the "Dialogues of Theology" of the Almudi Priests' Library. This organization has dedicated the cycle of talks to the

figure of priests in honor of the Year for the Priesthood, convoked by the Pope for the 150th anniversary of St. John Mary Vianney, the holy Curé of Ars, patron of parish priests.

Also taking part in the conference were the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, as well as the auxiliary bishops of Valencia, Esteban Escudero and Enrique Benavent.

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