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Bishop Echevarría Ordains 37 New Priests

The Prelate of Opus Dei ordained 37 priests from 16 countries on May 22 in Rome. In his homily, Bishop Echevarría said: “We have big hopes for them, as the world is so much in need of Christ’s love. By sowing peace and joy, we Christians are carriers of the ‘sweet fragrance of Christ’ so long as we remain closely united to Our Lord with unshakeable confidence in his goodness and power.”

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Landry Gbaka-Brédé, from Ivory Coast, is one of the 37 deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei who was ordained in Rome's basilica of St. Eugene. "In our 16 countries," he said "many people are searching for the meaning of life and very thirsty for God. I ask those who are reading this to help us with their prayers. We need them very much in order to be true instruments of Jesus Christ."

Bishop Echevarría: "The world is very much in need of Christ's love."

About 2,000 persons attended the ordination. The new priests almost filled the sanctuary. In his homily the Opus Dei Prelate reminded them that "the Lord himself has called you through your Ordinary. From now

on, throughout your lives, you will be Christ's ministers, visible instruments of the High Priest to perpetuate his Sacrifice on earth."

Bishop Echevarría also quoted from a letter of John Paul II reminding priests that in the Mass Christ becomes present in time through their hands: "How can we not be astonished at this reality? If the humility and love of Christ in the Eucharist are so unmeasurable, as St. Josemaría wrote, 'more than in the stable, more than in Nazareth, and more than on the Cross' (*The Way*, 533), all we can do is kneel in silent adoration before this great mystery of faith."

"An enormous task awaits us," Bishop Echevarría added. "It is enough to look around to see that the world is very much in need of Christ's love. Everywhere we see the malevolent fruits of hatred, violence,

crimes some men commit against other men. By sowing peace and joy, we Christians are carriers of “the sweet fragrance of Christ” so long as we remain closely united to Our Lord with unshakeable confidence in his goodness and power.”

The Opus Dei Prelate recalled some recent words of the Holy Father to a group of new priests: “Your priestly ordination takes place at a time when...strong cultural forces are trying to make people forget God—above all, young people and families. But don’t be afraid. God will always be with you! With his help you can find a way into the heart of each man and announce that the Good Shepherd has given his life for him and wants to make him a partaker in his mystery of love and salvation.”

In concluding, Bishop Echevarría congratulated the parents and other relatives of the new priests and

asked them to “pray for them and for all sacred ministers—the Pope, who celebrated his 84th birthday a few days ago, the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, and the bishops and priests of the entire world. May God bless you!”

Ivory Coast, a young and growing Church.

“In my country there is great need for peace and reconciliation,” said Father Landry, the new priest from Ivory Coast. His country is suffering from social and political instability; this means that “we have to learn how to forgive, for everyone has suffered. I ask God’s help so that as a priest I might contribute to the peace of Ivory Coast through the sacrament of Penance. In Confession, we Christians reconcile ourselves to God so that with a peaceful soul and the Lord’s help, we can build a society based on understanding and mutual assistance.”

Father Landry was born in 1973; like him, “the Catholic Church is young in my country and constantly growing.” He spoke hopefully of his future priestly work: “Priests are needed to attend people who are converting to Catholicism and have a keen desire to know their faith better. As I see it, this formation is one of the great goals of the Church in my country. I feel great responsibility to help people understand the teachings of Jesus Christ and to frequent the sacraments, especially Confession and the Mass.”

Supported by the prayers of many Australians and New Zealanders.

Peter Fitsimons, an Australian, is another of the new priests. Prior to ordination he practiced law and taught in the University of Waikato’s Law School in New Zealand. His mother travelled more than 12,000 miles from Sydney to be with him in

Rome, along with Uncle Vincent, a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and several other relatives and friends from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Malaysia.

According to Father Peter, his father (who died in 1999) was the source of his vocation: “He told me that he prayed for me to be generous with God. I am certain that his prayers helped me very much during all those years. I feel a great debt to my father, and now I am eager to pray for him every day at Holy Mass.” As for his celebration of the Eucharist, Father Peter said: “I know that the most important thing a priest does is to pray, and so I am asking St. Josemaría to help me love the Mass very much.”

On this day, Father Peter feels supported by the prayers of many people: “As an example, I received a letter from an English family,

Protestants. They asked that prayers for me be included in the religious bulletin of their church.

Ji Young, and the conversion of his family.

A Korean, Ji Young Emiliano Hong, was also ordained. Born in Seoul in 1973, he moved to Buenos Aires with his family in 1986. There he met the Catholic faith and in a short time was received into the Church. “First one of my aunts who lived in Korea was converted, and along with her my parents and brother found the path to the Catholic faith, as well as my aunts, uncles and grandparents. I was a Presbyterian, and in my family there were also Buddhists, but the majority were unbelievers.”

Father Ji Young explained that when John Paul II visited South Korea in 1984 there were a million Catholics; today there are more than four million. In part, he attributes this

explosion of conversions to the intercession of the Korean martyrs the Pope canonized on that trip, among them Pedro Lee, an ancestor of Ji Young on his mother's side.

For the new Korean priest, the family provided the context within which he found God and his conversion: "I ask the Lord that in these days there be more families like mine who find the way to God. In my case, it is clear that He acted through my aunt's conversion."

Besides Ivory Coast, Australia, and Korea, the new priests are from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Venezuela.

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