

Fr. Joseph Gabiola (12 May 1928 – 11 September 2015)

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09/20/2015

We regret to announce the death of Fr. Joseph Gabiola, known to many in Great Britain and elsewhere. It will be possible to visit his open coffin at the undertaker's premises:

France and Son

45 Lamb's Conduit Street

London WC1N 3NH

on the following days and at these times:

**Thursday 17 September,
9.00am-5.00pm**

Friday 18 September, 9.00am-5.00pm

Monday 21 September,
9.00am-1.00pm

The closed coffin will be brought in to the Oratory of Netherhall House, Nutley Terrace, Hampstead, London NW3 5SA, at approx. 4.30pm on Monday 21 September. Holy Mass will be celebrated that evening (time t.b.a.). All are welcome to attend, or to come in to pray at other times.

The funeral Mass proper will be said at St. Thomas More church, Maresfield Gardens (a short walk of a few hundred yards from Netherhall

House) at 11.30am on Tuesday 22 September. Interment will follow immediately at Gunnersbury Cemetery. There will be a reception afterwards open to all attending, at Netherhall House.

Fr. Joseph Gabiola was born in Bilbao, Spain, on 12 May 1928, the eldest of three brothers. He received his education right through to a doctorate of engineering in his home city. He asked for admission to Opus Dei on 20 May 1948, and went to Rome to complete studies for the priesthood and for a doctorate in canon law, 1953–1956, in close proximity to the Founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá. He was ordained priest on 7 August 1955 in Spain, where from 1956 he undertook pastoral work in Cádiz. His youngest brother, Sabino, was also to be

ordained a priest of Opus Dei, and survives him.

Asked by St. Josemaría in 1958 to help start Opus Dei in Kenya, Fr. Joseph played a big role in overcoming prejudices to create by 1961 East Africa's first multi-racial school, Strathmore College – a residential Sixth-Form college that has since achieved great prestige, formed many leading professional men, and spawned a university. Fr. Joseph, ever keen on sport, rejoiced in another 'first': a multi-racial school rugby team. He served as chaplain but also taught physics, and enlivened gatherings with guitar-playing. He helped the first women of Opus Dei in Kenya establish a secretarial training institution, Kianda College. On Kenya's independence in late 1963, Fr. Joseph obtained one of its earliest passports.

In 1965, at the Founder's behest, he moved to Nigeria to start again as Opus Dei's first Counsellor there, 1965–1971 – difficult years of coups and civil war. Working slowly but surely amidst of difficulties to establish the apostolates of men and women of Opus Dei, he also taught mathematics at the University of Ife 1965–1967, and was chaplain to the University, Ibadan Campus, 1967–1969.

From 1971 he was Vice-Rector for a year at the church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Saragossa, Spain. In 1972 he moved to Britain for most of the rest of his life. Typically, he so identified with the country that he took citizenship – while keeping a Kenyan passport. He served in Manchester, London, Oxford, and again London, helping to form young people, and having a big impact as spiritual guide on the lives of people of all kinds. He did much in later

years to spread in southern England private devotion to the Founder of Opus Dei who died in 1975 and was canonised in 2002.

Noteworthy also were his efforts for the local Church at large. He acted as a canonist on tribunals in the dioceses of Portsmouth and Westminster, in the latter of which his work also served churches in Scandinavia. He taught canon law for some years as a visiting lecturer at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham.

In 2000, responding faithfully as ever to a request from the Prelate of Opus Dei, he accepted the post of Regional Vicar of India and moved to New Delhi. His work helped prepare the way for later developments in the Sub-Continent.

On his return to Great Britain in 2005 he lived in London, active and ever ready to be useful despite varied

ailments. From early 2015 he was debilitated by an abscess on his leg which confined him to home where he still managed for a while to preach afternoons of recollection and hear confessions, besides saying Holy Mass. Many were moved to see his determination to genuflect as the rubrics required, whatever it cost him in pain.

On 23 July 2015, he collapsed at breakfast time with a stroke. He was well-served by paramedics, ambulance drivers and doctors at UCLH and at Queen Square. Members of Opus Dei and others spent hours by his bedside, attempting to stimulate him, without really significant success. He received the Anointing of the Sick. In early September he was moved to the St. Vincent's Care Home in Hammersmith where he died at 2.00am on Friday 11 September.

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