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37 New Priests

The prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, ordained 37 men from 14 countries on September 1. Echevarría urged them to let their priestly lives "follow the footsteps" of Blessed Josemaría now that his canonization is approaching.

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The ceremony was conducted at the Shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad in Spain, as in previous years. This year for the first time, however, the ordinations took place on the

shrine's esplanade, because the church would not fit the more than 7,000 participants, family and friends.

The new priests come from the United States, the Philippines, Nigeria, New Zealand, Argentina, Ecuador, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Portugal and Venezuela. The youngest one was from Mexico, Mario Arroyo, 28; the oldest from Spain, Eduardo Martínez, 57.

In his homily, Bishop Javier Echevarría noted the coinciding of the ordinations with the centennial of the birth and the upcoming canonization of Opus Dei's founder. He told those about to be ordained that Blessed Josemaría "had also prayed especially for them, when he prayed for the holiness of his sons who were priests and for all the priests of the world." Echevarría

asked everyone present to pray for those being ordained "so that they might be, as Blessed Josemaría wished, pious, learned and cheerful, with a sporting spirit in both supernatural and human matters."

"Let us go to our Lady as we prepare for October 6th," the prelate of Opus Dei urged. "Our Mother in heaven plays a central role in the daily conversion that is necessary to receive God's grace fruitfully. Let us ask her to win this grace for each and every one who will attend the canonization in Rome, and for those who will unite themselves spiritually to this act in their homes."

At the end of his homily, Bishop Echevarría asked everyone present to pray daily for "many vocations of priests with a hunger for holiness, for these vocations are indispensable to administer God's forgiveness and to satisfy the needs of all souls with

the bread of God's word and with the Eucharistic Bread."

A blessing for the family

After the ceremony, Martin Miller of Illinois expressed his desire "to preach the Gospel and to bring hope to people. They need to know that holiness is within reach for ordinary people, those who get up early to go to work, come home and help the kids with their homework, juggle accounts in order to make it to the end of the month. Blessed – soon to be St. – Josemaria Escriva said that for these people Heaven is not so far from their daily tasks."

Jude Idahosa, a new priest from Nigeria, formerly an agronomic engineer, expressed "the desire to work as a priest in my country." His father, Atkinson Egharevba, of the Edo religion, came to the ceremony in his tribal garb: "Africa needs many and very good priests. We need

hundreds of them," he said. Jude's mother, Janette, considers it "a blessing of God that has called my son to his service. It could never have been imagined; only He could do it."

We see him happy

At present it signifies a great deal for a Dutch family to have a son as a priest. "Thirty years ago, it was normal enough for Catholic families of our country to have a son as a priest. Now, unfortunately, this does not occur, so our happiness for this gift is enormous," said Wil, mother of Wilhelmus Veth. There were more than 50 friends and relatives of the new priest in the Dutch contingent. "We all have many hopes for him, and we expect, God willing, that his service in the Netherlands will be fruitful," they said.

A large group came also from the French region of Brittany, to

accompany Jean Philippe Huet. His mother said she was "very happy about the road that our son has chosen, because we see him happy. Also our family and friends were delighted when we told them that he was going to be ordained."

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