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20 New Deacons for the Church: “Keep One Ear on God and the Other on the People”

On Saturday, 23 November twenty faithful of Opus Dei from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Chile, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, Spain, and the United States were ordained to the diaconate. The ceremony took place at the Basilica of St. Eugene in Rome, with Bishop Hugo Nicolás Barbaro, of San Roque de Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña

(Argentina), presiding as the ordaining bishop.

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Bishop Hugo Barbaro: “Be a Carpet for Others”

In his homily, Bishop Barbaro highlighted the spirit of service that characterizes the life of a deacon and a priest, “because Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life.”

He reminded the new deacons that their mission will be to assist the Prelate of Opus Dei in his pastoral service and encouraged them to engrave on their hearts “the teachings of St. Josemaría, who longed to serve all human beings, without distinction.”

“What does the diaconate add to a layperson’s service? What does it add to future ministerial priesthood?” he asked. “St. Josemaría himself answers: the priest must be like a carpet on which others tread softly. This is the beginning of a time for you to train in the art of being a carpet.”

The bishop also recalled these words of Pope Francis: “Serving means being available, renouncing living according to one’s own agenda, being ready for God’s surprises that manifest themselves through people, the unexpected, changes of plan, situations that do not fit into our schemes and frameworks.”

He told the deacons: “But it is essential — and integral to service and self-giving — not to lose sight of the fact that God speaks through the needs of our brothers and sisters, through the needs of the people,

which often do not align with what we have planned..”

To be “a carpet upon which others tread softly,” he added, we need to “keep one ear on God and the other on the people, as the Pope often says.” Quoting again from the founder of Opus Dei, he said, “We are here to serve others, making their path to God pleasant,” and that “to serve is to help, to pray, to excuse, to smile, to encourage, to mortify oneself, to care, to listen, and to treat everyone with the same affection.”

Monsignor Ocáriz: Christ is the model of service

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, Prelate of Opus Dei and ordinary of the new deacons, thanked the ordaining bishop and congratulated the ordinands and their families. He also highlighted that in this “special mission of service to the people of

God, Christ is the model.” For this reason, he said, “a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and in prayer is fundamental, because it is there that our hearts are expanded to embrace everyone, imitating Christ’s heart.”

Addressing the families, he encouraged them to “continue accompanying the new deacons with your prayers in the months leading up to their ordination to the priesthood.” He added, “I cannot help but think of the joy St. Josemaría must be feeling in Heaven at this moment. We turn to his intercession so that the new deacons may welcome and accompany all souls. On this journey, they will always be able to count on all of us and on the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin.”

The new deacons are: Vincenzo Maria Affinita (Italy), Stefano

Baravelli (Italy), John Robert Bickford (United States), Daniel Callejo Goena (Spain), Ramón Alfonso Díaz Perfecto (Hungary), Arturo Miguel Escamilla Contreras (Australia), Santiago Fabregat Trueba (Mexico), Ramón Fernández Aparicio (Spain), Luis García-Menacho Ariz (Spain), José María López-Barajas González (Austria), Jose Miguel Marasigan Mondragon (Philippines), Robert Alvin Marsland III (United States), Ezequiel Mercau Bressan (Ireland), Álvaro Orejana Martín (Spain), Pedro Pablo Perkins (Argentina), Santiago Populín Such (Argentina), Enrique Sañoso Vela (Spain), Antonio Santos García (Spain), Gonzalo Silió Pardo (Spain), and Cristóbal Vargas Balcells (Chile).

Watch the ceremony, broadcast from the Basilica of St. Eugene, [here](#), and download the booklet containing the texts of the ceremony [here](#).

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