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Archbishop Alfred Martins of Lagos Celebrates Requiem Mass for Prelate of Opus Dei

Following the very first Mass said by the Auxillary Vicar of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, thousands more have been celebrated all over the world for the repose of the soul of Bishop Echevarría.

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The Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Dr. Alfred Adewale Martins, who had met Msgr. Echevarría also decided to say a Mass for the eternal repose of this most faithful son of the Church whom Pope Francis recently described as having given “*his life in a constant service of love to the Church and souls*”. The Requiem Mass took place at the Lagos Cathedral on Saturday January 12, 2017 at 11:00 am.

Concelebrating with Archbishop Martins were the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Nigeria, Msgr. Ignatius Sotos and other priests of the archdiocese of Lagos as well as priests of the Prelature. More than 500 people, made up of faithful of Opus Dei, Cooperators, friends, and their families, attended the Mass to carry out the joyful filial duty of entrusting Msgr. Javier Echevarría's soul to God.

Rev. Fr. Boniface Okafor, a priest of the Opus Dei Prelature, gave the homily. In it, he recalled different aspects of the life of Msgr. Javier Echevarría, his effort to be a good Christian, and his faithfulness in being a worthy successor of Saint Josemaría Escrivá at the head of Opus Dei. Fr. Okafor also recalled the two visits that Bishop Echevarría made to Nigeria: first in 1989, accompanying Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, first successor of St. Josemaría Escrivá, and then in 1999, when having succeeded Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Msgr. Echevarría as Prelate of Opus Dei came to visit his Nigerian children and all those who were close to Opus Dei.

For many of the faithful at the Mass it was an overwhelmingly personal yet familial spiritual experience. According to one: *“It was a very beautiful Mass, where the members of God's household gathered around*

their bishop, to offer prayers for their Father. I felt that the Father (Bishop Echevarría) had brought us together as a family, and it was a real joy to see all St. Josemaría's Nigerian children gathered together with their diocesan Bishop (Msgr. Alfred Martins). I felt once more a child of the Church, of this diocese, one of the Archbishop's flock, yet obviously and uniquely a child of St. Josemaría Escrivá, of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo and of the Father (Bishop Javier Echevarría). So, this union between the two filled me with joy. In summary, apart from praying I felt whole, Ecclesial!"

The Requiem Mass was a very good opportunity to respond to one of Bishop Echevarría's last requests – to pray for the Church and to pray for the next Prelate, and of course everyone wanted to join in commending his soul to God. On December 3, a few days before he died, he had said: *"May we all go*

forth together, may you be united to the Father always, whoever he may be. I am already very much passing through. Therefore, I would like you to pray also for the next Father. We don't know when or how it will be... But I ask you to pray so that we may truly foster this stupendous unity, which can never, never fail”.

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