

"Be ministers of divine mercy"

On May 10 in Rome, Bishop Javier Echevarría ordained 30 deacons to the priesthood. The new priests come from 11 different countries: Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Philippines, France, Mexico, United Kingdom, Uganda and Uruguay.

05/12/2014

Dennis: "Your prayers sustain us priests"

Tadeo: God's Green Light

Photos from the ceremony

*Homily of Bishop Javier Echevarría,
Prelate of Opus Dei:*

Dear sons about to be ordained. Dear brothers and sisters.

1. We have recently witnessed the canonization of John XXIII and John Paul II. Among our motives for thanksgiving, in the first place we raise our hearts to God for having enriched the Church with new signs of its sanctity. I cannot fail to recall (above all today, at the priestly ordination of deacons of the Prelature) that during his many years of pastoral service in the see of Peter, St John Paul II ordained to the priesthood a large number of faithful of Opus Dei.

And so we also extend our gratitude to him for having contributed so

significantly to prolonging the chain of sacred ministers in Opus Dei; a chain that began in 1944 with the ordination of the first members, among whom was our beloved Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. To both of them, St John Paul II and the future blessed Alvaro, we direct our thoughts, seeking their intercession so that the new priests, and all bishops, priests and deacons, may walk swiftly along the path of sanctity. Particularly, as good sons and daughters, we renew our resolution to pray a lot for the Holy Father, for his work, his intentions and his collaborators.

We know what the Church and the world hope for from priests: that they bring the Gospel message to the men and women of our time, particularly to those who share our common Christian vocation, preparing them to fruitfully receive the grace of the sacraments. So, my

sons, you will be *ministers of divine mercy*, dispensers of the forgiveness of sins and the Bread of Life. The readings of the Fourth Sunday of Easter, known as *Good Shepherd Sunday*, speak to us of God's mercy, towards which we all need to direct our gaze. In a particular way, those of us who have received the priestly ministry look to the Master and the Good Shepherd and, like St Josemaría, we ask: "may I see with your eyes, my Jesus!"

2. In a recent audience, referring to the sacrament of Holy Orders, Pope Francis recalled St Paul's recommendation to Timothy: *stir into flame the gift of God that you have received through the imposition of my hands* (2 Tm 1:6). And he remarked: "When the ministry is not fostered (the ministry of the bishop, the ministry of the priest) through prayer, through listening to the Word of God, through the daily celebration

of the Eucharist and also through regularly going to the Sacrament of Penance, the priest inevitably ends up losing sight of the authentic meaning of his own service and the joy which comes from a profound communion with Jesus.”^[1]

I want to dwell for a moment on the need for prayer in order to truly become “priests through and through,” as St Josemaría frequently said. How often I heard him give this advice to priests! Suffice it for now to recall a passage from a homily on the priesthood in which he briefly describes the work of priests: “They have to study theology constantly; they must give spiritual guidance to very many souls, hear many confessions, preach tirelessly and pray a great deal; their hearts must always be focused on the tabernacle, where He who has chosen us to be his own is really present. Their lives are a wonderful self-surrender, full

of joy, though like everyone they will meet with difficulties.”^[2]

3. Let us have immense confidence in our Lord, supreme Shepherd of the Church (better still, the only Shepherd, since the sacred ministers are only his instruments, chosen by him in order to make himself present and act in the midst of his flock). We are reminded of this by today’s Gospel, in which Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd: *he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice (Jn 10:3-4).*

Rightly then, we can make our own the words of the responsorial psalm: *the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul (Ps 23 [22]:1-3).* Especially in the darker

moments that come at times in the course of life, let us go to the One who awaits us in the tabernacle, to share with him the burden that weighs on our souls, the difficulties that perhaps overwhelm us. And we will remain at peace. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your crook and your staff, they comfort me (Ps 23 [22]:4).*

My dearest sons! In the Work, our Lord has wanted to offer us an outstanding model of a shepherd: St Josemaría, our beloved Father, who outdid himself in his prodigious dedication to the formation of the priests of Opus Dei. Don Alvaro recalled this in one of the priestly ordinations that God granted him to preside. “I cannot help but recall,” he said, “the unlimited dedication with which our Father cared for the formation of the members of the

Prelature who were preparing for our priestly ordination.”^[3]

I have personally experienced how St Josemaría used to ask all of the faithful of the Prelature (and, therefore, also the priests) to revive daily their diligent effort to serve souls, without forgetting the poor and the sick, who are a treasure for the Church and for society. With their help Opus Dei was born.

We are nearing the beatification of Don Alvaro, which will take place in September. I suggest that you turn to him with confidence and that you recall his life of faithful service to God and souls. With his words, I repeat to you: “Don’t ever be frightened by the disproportion between your littleness and the greatness of the *mysteries of God* of which you will be dispensers. May this disproportion, while impelling you to fight for personal sanctity,

always be a motive of wonder and gratitude for God's goodness.”[4]

4. Before concluding, I want to extend a special greeting to the parents and brothers and sisters of the new priests, and to their relatives and friends here present. Thank the Lord for the gift which he has given you; may this priestly ordination be a stimulus which brings you closer to God. And you, dear sons, never forget all that you owe to the prayer, the education and the good example that you have received in the heart of your families. Keep in mind these words which St John Paul II addressed to priests:

“The call to pray with families and for families, dear Brothers, concerns each one of you in a very personal way. We owe our life to our parents and we owe them a permanent debt of gratitude. Whether they are still alive or have already passed into

eternity, we are united with them by a close bond which time does not destroy. While we owe our vocation to God, a significant role in it is also to be attributed to our parents . . . Every priest can say of himself: 'I am indebted to God and to others.' There are many people who have accompanied us with their thoughts and prayers."⁵

Let us unite ourselves, then, to the prayer of the Church so that the divine Sower may always sow throughout the whole world, and with an ever-increasing abundance, the call to serve him in the priestly ministry. Let us entrust our petition to Mary in this month dedicated to her, the Mother of all men and women and especially of priests.

[1]Pope Francis, Homily from the General Audience, 26 March 2014.

[2]St Josemaría, Homily *A Priest Forever*, 13 April 1973.

[3] Don Alvaro, Homily for a priestly ordination, 6 September 1992.

[4] Don Alvaro, Homily for a priestly ordination, 1 September 1991.

[5]St John Paul II, *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday*, 13 March 1994.

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