

Good Son, Good Father

"When a good person we love passes away, a thousand memories flood our heart." An article on the impact of the death of Bishop Javier Echevarría in the hearts of so many people.

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When a good person we love passes away, a thousand memories flood our heart. Even more so when that person happens to be a Father who showed over and over again how he

lived only for us, in order to place us in Christ's heart. Our acts of thanksgiving combine with desires to make reparation for our own lack of correspondence. And the reality of death and the passing of time become more present to us. The pain of someone's absence unites with the glorious hope of heaven; and while praying for the repose of the soul of a fellow Christian, we also become aware of the presence of a new and powerful intercessor. This is how the death of Don Javier has resonated in the hearts of so many people in the Work, and in so many others who are close to us.

The death of a Father like Don Javier brings to mind so many memories, some of them personal and others, as is often the case, heard as family stories told over and over again from generation to generation. We can sense, almost better in hindsight, the singular value of a life spent in self-

giving right from youth, at first close to Saint Josemaria and then with Blessed Alvaro, and finally as successor to both, with his heart and intelligence always intent on transmitting faithfully the spirit he had received from God through their hands. The affection that Saint Josemaria showed Don Javier from very early on, responded to with filial admiration and obedience and with faith in God's action in his saints, made of Don Javier a loyal and brave son. His sense of divine filiation passed through the channel of filiation to the Father in the Work, first in his mission to attend to the material needs of Saint Josemaria, and then in the close assistance he rendered Don Alvaro.

Don Javier's constant and energetic service as *custos* of the Father, and the faithful fulfillment, *ad mentem Patris*, of the tasks entrusted to him, were an intense preparation for his

long pastoral ministry as the Father and Prelate of Opus Dei. His close relationship with God, and the example and closeness of Saint Josemaria and Blessed Alvaro opened the heart of this faithful son so that God's grace could fill it with charity. He was a good son, and he was a good Father. Always giving his life for his daughters and sons in Opus Dei, and attentive to strengthening the ties of our supernatural fraternity, he was a son not only when Saint Josemaria and Don Alvaro were on this earth, but also afterwards. With his so evident strength of character, he yearned for these two giants of faith and love, and always knew he was in their presence. His heart beat with nostalgia for the years spent alongside Saint Josemaria, a man who knew how to love and who even today is so loved.

As Father and Prelate, he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his saintly predecessors, and never separate himself from that well-trodden path, caring lovingly for the spirit they had sculpted out. As a son, he was a courageous "co-heir with Christ" (cf. *Rom 8:7*); he joyfully carried the Cross, the blessed weight of souls, an easy yoke and light burden (cf. *Mt 11:30*). Sometimes Don Javier would say that we have to stake everything on the card of Love. This was his great desire, his constant endeavor.

"If the one we have called Father for twenty-two years were here with us," said Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, now Prelate of Opus Dei, in the homily at the funeral mass celebrated in Saint Eugene's Basilica, "he would surely ask us to take advantage of these days to intensify our love for the Church and the Pope, and to remain closely united with one another and with all our

brothers and sisters in Christ. And he would tell us once again those words that, especially in his final years on earth, had become a frequent refrain on his lips: 'love one another a lot, with an ever greater love!' And this was more than just words; it was moving to see how he loved others. I recall for example how the day before he died he told me he was worried about becoming a hindrance, since so many people were looking after him. And I told him spontaneously: 'No, Father, it's you who are sustaining all of us.'"

Now this good and faithful son continues to sustain all of us from heaven. Many people have noticed the ways in which Don Javier, since the day he died, helps them in so many aspects of their daily life, as though the Father who always had an active and generous temperament, and who so often invited us to go to the intercession of

those who have preceded us, wanted to do all he could to help each one of us; maybe to thank us for that letter we wrote him; or to respond to that question that we never got to ask him. In other words, to continue helping us sense God's fatherhood.

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