

Prelate of Opus Dei describes family as the forge of vocations in the Church

Bishop Javier Echevarría ordained seven new priests, from five countries, in a ceremony at the sanctuary of Torreciudad, on Sunday, August 31.

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Nearly five thousand people attended the ceremony, including numerous relatives and friends of the men being ordained. The cheerfulness of the atmosphere was evident, and after the ceremony, some relatives of the new priests expressed their gratitude to God for "the undeserved gift that has been given us with the vocation of our son." Some of those present at the ordinations at Torreciudad had come from great distances, such as Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and Brazil.

In the homily of the ceremony, Bishop Javier Echevarría asked all present to pray that there would always be "enough holy priests, well formed, happy and full of apostolic zeal – enough to meet the needs of the Church throughout the world." He noted that the family is "where the various vocations in the Church are forged" and expressed the desire that families be "truly Christian, that

they view the call of some of their children to the priesthood as a great divine blessing."

In his homily directed to the new priests, Bishop Echevarría described St. Josemaría Escrivá's life as a "model for your priesthood." Among the various priestly virtues that the newly ordained should practice, he emphasized continuous availability "to administer the God's pardon in the sacrament of penance." After urging them particularly to take care of their eucharistic piety, he said: "May your behaviour declare that you are men who believe and who love."

The new priests include 3 Italians: Danilo Ragolia, 33, an electrical engineer; Giulio Maspero, 33, a physicist; and Nicola Zenoni, 40, also an engineer. Also ordained were: José María Pardo Sáenz, 33, a Spanish physician and bioethics

specialist; James E. Bermúdez, 31, a journalist from Puerto Rico; Nilton Mariano de Souza, 36, a soldier from Brazil; and Abelardo Rivera Sibaja, 41, an economist from Costa Rica.

In an interview after the ceremony, Fr. Bermúdez, who wrote for the San Juan Star in Puerto Rico, compared his new work as a priest to his former work as a journalist, saying that it was his “dream to continue spreading good news as a priest.” He added, “I think we should make the path of holiness appealing, and the Christian who works in the media has to be pleasant.”

Thanksgiving for the ordinations

The mood of the ceremony was captured by Juanin Y. Malonga, 24, a Guinean professional who has just finished his studies in education in Barcelona: "I was amazed by the number of young people that attended, and by the prayerful

atmosphere, which was helping you pray for these vocations of service to the Church."

Fr. Bermúdez' parents came from Puerto Rico with two children and other relatives. They said the ordinations were "the best day of our lives, a great gift from God."

Coronado and Gladys, parents of Fr. Rivera of Costa Rica said they felt "very moved by this undeserved gift." His sisters Mercedes and Alejandrina also came, and described the ceremony as "beautiful, a gift of God for the family." Fr. de Souza's mother also emphasized her gratitude "for this grace that God has offered our family."

José María Pardo, father of the new Spanish priest, commented that in total about thirty relatives and friends had come from Madrid and Jaén. He described his son's ordination as "a sensation so strong

that I feel overwhelmed and cannot believe that it would move me so much.” He also indicated his desire that his son would be a very holy priest.

An expedition of forty relatives and friends of the three new Italian priests came from several cities in Italy. Carmela, Fr. Maspero’s mother, declared: “I feel so fortunate that my son has become a priest. I wasn’t too excited about it at first, because I wanted to have a lot of grandchildren, but now I thank God and St. Josemaría for such a wonderful grace.”

This past May 31, the Prelate had ordained 26 priests from 12 countries, and on September 13, he ordained 2 more in Argentina. The clergy of the Prelature are drawn from lay numeraries and associates in Opus Dei. Their pastoral ministry is conducted mainly through service

to the faithful of the Prelature and in the apostolic activities they carry out.

Torreciudad (Huesca, Spain) -
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