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Ordination of 27 Deacons: “Welcome, understand, accompany”

Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta
ordained 27 faithful of Opus Dei
as deacons on 21 November.
With his homily and words of
the Prelate, Monsignor
Fernando Ocáriz.

11/22/2020

Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta
conferred diaconal ordination this
afternoon on 27 faithful of Opus Dei

who come from Germany, Romania, Brazil, Canada, England, Ivory Coast, Slovakia, Spain, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Lithuania, Nigeria and Peru. The ceremony was held in Our Lady of the Angels, the church of the Prelature's international seminary in Rome.

“Welcome, understand, accompany, love. These are the attitudes that, from now on, should mark your life even more clearly,” Bishop Arrieta said to the new deacons during his homily. “All of them can be summed up with one verb: to serve. Give to others the most precious thing you have and that God himself has placed in your hands.”

The consecrating bishop reminded them that “this is the key to the feast we are celebrating today. The

solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, reminds us that the kingdom of the Son of God is service.” (See entire homily below.)

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, accompanied the deacons from the presbytery. At the end of the ceremony he addressed their families: “I want to send you my warmest greetings and ask you to keep praying diligently, accompanying the new deacons in the period of formation that will lead them to the priesthood. To those of you who can come, I hope to see you in Rome next May. Finally, I am sure that this ordination will have brought joy to Saint Josemaría in Heaven. Let us turn to his intercession so that the new deacons may be men who know how to welcome, understand and love all souls. On this path you will always be accompanied by our Lady’s motherly mediation. Congratulations.”

Due to the measures needed to contain the coronavirus pandemic, the ceremony was held in private, although many people have been able to follow it by live streaming .

These are the names of the new deacons: Francisco Javier Alfaro Gutiérrez, Mariano Almela Martínez, Pablo Álvarez Doreste, Juan Manuel Arbulú Saavedra, Francisco Javier Barrera Bernal, Alessandro Bona, Branislav Borovský, Gaspar Ignacio Brahm Mir, Kevin de Souza, Borja Díaz de Bustamante de Ussia, Juan Diego Esquivias Padilla, Rafael Gil-Nogués, André Guerreiro, Alejandro Gutiérrez de Cabiedes Hidalgo de Caviedes, Casimir Kouassi N'gouan, Fernando López-Rivera Muñoz, Josemaría Mayora Padilla, José Ignacio Mir Montes, Jaime Moya Martín, Juan Prieto Álvarez, Héctor Razo Tena, Vytautas Jonas Saladis, Fadi Sarraf Chalhoub, Fumiaki Shinozaki, Marc Teixidor Viayna,

Álvaro Tintoré Espuny and Obilor
Bruno Ugwulali.

Homily of Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta

Dear Father, dear ordinands, dear
families and friends:

The Solemnity of Christ the King (the
celebration of which begins with this
Holy Eucharist) is a good opportunity
to consider briefly – amid the
ongoing situation we are
experiencing – the mission of service
and charity that the Church is going
to confer on you with the diaconate.

In the Gospel of Saint Matthew that
we have just heard, Jesus describes
the Final Judgment: “When the Son
of man comes in his glory, and all the
angels with him, then he will sit on

his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations.”

Our Lord is presented here as both Shepherd and King. As a Shepherd who has spent years caring for his sheep, and now has to separate them, with some on his right and others on his left. As a King too, who judges those he has placed on both sides. Jesus says that He himself will be the King who will judge. And then He judges all of them, making clear the reason for the sentence he gives to each one: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink...”

The Gospel account seems to say that all the sheep will react then with surprise: When did we see you hungry and feed you, when did we see you thirsty...? None of them has fully understood yet that Christ himself was in all the people beside them during their life, and was

quietly begging for a generous response in all these situations.

But what is even more surprising, humanly speaking, is to see to what extent our Lord, who is always just and impartial, has “personalized” all these actions; how He has taken in such a personal way, we could say, our actions towards our neighbor, as acts of love or lack of love directed towards his own person: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

Here our Lord declares to what extent He himself is present in each of his children, in those He places at our side, but also in those who physically are far away. For if we are attentive, we will realize that those far away are also very close to us thanks to the Communion of Saints.

A key part of our spiritual progress consists precisely in unraveling this

mystery in our own life. And an important part of our struggle as a Christian consists in putting it into practice each day, in every circumstance, imitating Christ's behavior.

The sure sign that we love God, Saint Teresa of Avila said, is our effort to love our neighbor. For although we cannot measure our love for God, we can see what our love for others is like.

You can imagine my joy at being able to be here to confer upon you the diaconate in this exceptional situation, in this church of Our Lady of the Angels that our Father [Saint Josemaría, founder of Opus Dei] wanted with so much love and faith to see built here. We have spent a wonderful month of August together in Tor d'Aveia, where we were able to enjoy together so many opportunities that life in the Work

offers us and that we thank our Lord for as part of the hundredfold.

I would be lying if I said I was surprised by the call of the Father [Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Prelate of Opus Dei] last Tuesday night when he asked me to preside at this ceremony today. The truth is that, given the ongoing situation, for some time now I realized (pardon the military expression) that I was the “sentry on call,” with the chances of having to intervene being quite high and increasing. And I am very happy to be able to do it, although naturally I regret that things could not go as planned. Thank you, Father, for giving me this opportunity.

The days surrounding this ceremony have truly been complicated. The health crisis has disrupted many plans and caused so much suffering. You have not been unaffected either, since the fact that your family

members and friends could not be here has been compounded, right up to the last moment, by your uncertainty as to whether you would actually be able to receive the sacred diaconal ordination on today's date. But in hindsight, all of this has certainly helped you to pray more, to abandon yourselves to God's will, and to better prepare yourselves to receive this Sacrament.

The solemnity of Christ the King also invites us to see all these events from the divine perspective of the Lord of History. We have been helped to realize that, as always throughout the whole of history and in our personal lives, He draws fruit from each situation, although we may fail to understand clearly how He does so. Therefore always trusting in God and in his loving Providence is a safe refuge. Not only now, in the present circumstances filled with perplexity, but as a permanent attitude:

abandoning ourselves in the arms of a Father who loves us madly and prepares a sure path for us. The “sure and savory” fruit of that abandonment, Saint Josemaría assured us, will be the *gaudium cum pace*, the joy and peace that nothing can take away.

In the first reading we find a summary of what your ministry will be as deacons, and later as priests. “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep ... I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak.” You are called to go out to seek souls, to spare no effort for them.

With the Sacrament of Orders, the gift of the vocation to Opus Dei that you received years ago will be “specified,” as the Father says in his recent Letter, in a new way. This will necessarily require from you a

certain learning effort that will enrich you and that, with God's grace, will develop a new way of serving, this time as ministers of his grace, the Prelature of Opus Dei, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross and the entire Church.

Welcome, understand, accompany, love. These are the attitudes that, from now on, should mark your life even more clearly. All of them can be summed up with one verb: to serve. Give to others the most precious thing you have and that God himself has placed in your hands. If we truly strive to live with a concern for those around us, and try to foster the "youthful soul" that the Father asks of us, we will experience how happiness is the result of our self-giving.

This is the key to the feast we are celebrating today. The solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the

Universe, reminds us that the kingdom of the Son of God is service.

Dear ordinands, if anyone knows what it means to serve in a selfless way, it is your parents, who in some cases will have already received their reward in Heaven. You know this better than I do. They have done all they could for each one of you. They have given themselves joyfully so that the seed of faith may grow in you. Now their joy at your ordination is joined to their pain at not being able to be here with you.

I would like briefly to address myself personally to them, to the parents, relatives and friends of those being ordained and who are following the broadcast of this ceremony. As Saint Josemaría said on occasions like this, realize that they still need you. Don't stop supporting them with your prayers, with your affection. Offer up for them and for their ministry that

begins today your pain at not being present here. But also be filled with joy because our Lord draws out so much good from it and knows so well how to be generous.

I'm going to finish. Last Wednesday, in his catechesis on prayer, Pope Francis spoke about the prayer of our Lady, and how it led to her generous response. "Mary didn't guide her life on her own. She waits for God to take the reins of her path and guide her where He wants. She is docile, and with her availability she prepares the great events in which God takes part in the world."

We place in the hands of our Mother in Heaven (today we are celebrating her Presentation in the Temple), this same desire that Jesus may take the reins of our own lives, and especially that He may always guide you in your future ministry.

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