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31 New Priests from 15 Countries

On Saturday May 5, Cardinal Robert Sarah ordained 31 priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei in Saint Eugene's Basilica in Rome. "We ask the Lord to send us many holy priests," he said.

05/08/2018

The new priests come from 15 different countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, France, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, The Netherlands, Philippines, Slovakia, Spain, Uganda, Uruguay and Venezuela. The Prelate

of Opus Dei, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, participated in the ceremony from the presbytery.

Photo Gallery

“What exactly is a priest?”, asked Cardinal Sarah during the homily. Cardinal Sarah is the prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

"The Bible presents the priest as a man of the Word of God," he explained. “Contemporary man goes to the priest seeking Christ. About other topics (whether economic, social or political) they have so many other competent persons they can consult.” The priest is a preacher of Christ's truth: “He speaks with charity and, at the same time, with true freedom."

In Sacred Scripture, “the priest is also presented as the man of pardon. Like the Curé of Ars, like Padre Pío, the

priest is the *apostle of the confessional*, as Pope Francis reminded us a few days ago," he said.

Cardinal Sarah referred to the priest as a "friend of Christ." A friend that is recognized in a special way in the Eucharist, because "there is no Eucharist without the priesthood, just as there is no priesthood without the Eucharist." That's why, the Cardinal added, "each day we need the Eucharist to live out our priesthood and to be daring messengers of the Gospel in the midst of the sufferings, difficulties and hostilities that we encounter, and that should never overwhelm us."

The Cardinal invited the new priests to seek holiness and to be men "of deep interior life." Citing Saint Josemaria, he stressed that "the path that leads to holiness is the path of prayer; and prayer ought to take root

and grow in the soul little by little, like the tiny seed which later develops into a tree with many branches" (*Friends of God*, nos. 294-295).

The priesthood is a service to the Church and to all souls. "As you learned from Saint Josemaria and his successors, always be very loyal to the Roman Pontiff, to the bishops, successors of the Apostles, and to your Prelate. Love the priests in each diocese; beg the Lord constantly to send many laborers for his harvest, to send many holy priests, as guardians *to feed the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood* (*Acts* 20:28)."

The Cardinal also congratulated the parents and families of the new priests: "From today on, you will have someone with your own blood interceding for you before God. At the same time, we all need to pray

for them even more than before, since the responsibility they have taken on is great.”

At the end of the ceremony, the Cardinal gave each of the new priests a rosary and a small icon of Our Lady of Tenderness. “I want to give these to you,” he told them, “so that you may unite yourselves more closely to Holy Mary and in order to oblige you, in some way, to pray for me.” The full homily of Cardinal Sarah is available here.

"God has been so good to me"

Hailing from Córdoba, Argentina, Agustín Silberberg is 44 years old and is one of the new priests. From a family of doctors and also one himself, he is a specialist in internal medicine and worked in a number of hospitals, until he decided to study theology. He also played rugby on a regular basis for 10 years. “God has been so good to me. Having been

able to exercise medicine helps me understand better the deep meaning of this new service to others."

From the Philippines, Alfred Cruz is 31 years old and studied architecture at the University of the Philippines. Before beginning his studies for the priesthood, he worked as an architect in a studio called "Asian Architects." He also directed the social projects carried out by university students at the Kapuluan Study Center in Quezon City: attending to the poor and the sick, teaching catechism to children, work camps, etc.

One of six new African priests, Elobuike Anthony Asogwa was born in Enugu, Nigeria, in 1986. He studied electrical engineering in Nigeria before coming to Europe to study philosophy and theology. His name "Elobuike" literally means "counsel is strength." He says it

reminds him “of the importance of advice, because one of the greatest needs of every human being is the truth.” He is actually the second priest in his family: “I have a brother who is a diocesan priest, and to have two priests in the family is a great joy! Now that we will be brothers in the priesthood as well, we will help each other mutually: he will help me and I will help him. We will also rely on the prayers of many people.”

“I want to bring Christ's joy to every person”

Also among the new priests is Pierre Laffon, a Frenchman who, before coming to study in Rome, worked as a communications consultant for a number of organizations. Pierre looks forward to returning to France, with a new desire to communicate the joy that comes from the faith: “The priest's mission is to bring Christ's joy to everyone. I ask our

Lord to always give me the joy of having Him with me each day, and to never be a 'sad believer,' with a 'funeral face,' as Pope Francis says. I know that this joy will be mine if I remain faithful to the mission God has chosen for me."

Martijn Pouw, born in Maastricht (The Netherlands) in 1977, worked previously as a lawyer and as a university professor. An avid bicyclist, he now contemplates the challenge of exercising his new professional work in a very secular country: "I like the idea of being a bridge; just the fact of dressing this way leads to having to give answers to questions about God, the meaning of life and human happiness." The way Martijn sees it, "leaving behind a career as a lawyer might shock some, but I have pondered it well, and also talked it over a lot with God in my prayer. A lawyer defends the temporal interests of his client, while

a priest is concerned about people's eternal interests. So I believe there is a certain continuity.”

Finally, Francisco Javier Fernández Centeno is a pharmacist from Andalucia, Spain, who left behind the lab coat to study theology in Rome. A big fan of bird watching (“in the house where I grew up we had pigeons, canaries, owls, eaglets, ashes, caravans, rattlesnakes, turtledoves and other species,” he claims), he has a degree in pharmacy and spent 20 years assisting clients in a pharmacy. He is one of the founders of the Spanish Association of Social Pharmacy.

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