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Prelate's Homily at Priestly Ordinations

Here is the homily given by Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, at the May 4 ordination of 31 priests, in the Basilica of San Eugenio in Rome.

05/08/2013

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

1. Over the past weeks we have been witnesses and protagonists of a great event in the life of the Church: the

beginning of a new pontificate. We are witnesses because we have contemplated once again the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit who exceeds human expectations. And we are protagonists because, as living members of the Church, we have prayed a great deal and we continue to pray so that these circumstances might spur all Catholics to strive more ardently for personal sanctification and apostolic deeds.

The Easter season makes the risen Christ present, the conqueror of sin and of all evil. Our Lord desires each of us to make him present in the situations in which we find ourselves: in our families, and in our social and professional activities. “God's calling,” St Josemaría teaches, “gives us a mission: it invites us to share in the unique task of the Church, to bear witness to Christ

before our fellow men and so draw all things toward God.”[1]

I invite you, therefore, to ask yourself whether the joy and the good desires which we experienced upon the election of the Roman Pontiff, and also during this time of Easter, have forged in us concrete decisions of personal improvement, of zeal for the salvation of souls. We cannot be satisfied with good feelings; rather we should make a real effort, with God's help, to turn them into specific realities.

2. Today we are attending a priestly ordination, a great gift of God to his Church. This event can and should mean, for all of us, a push to exercise our priestly soul in the service of others. The first reading speaks of the example of Paul and Barnabas, *men who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26)*. Indeed, they valiantly

defended the essential characteristics of the Christian faith, confronting those who wanted to distort it. We too must commit ourselves seriously to the defence and the spread of our faith. Now that we find ourselves in the second half of the Year of Faith, we can examine whether we have insistently asked our Lord for an increase in this virtue, along with hope and charity, aware that it is a gift of God which we cannot attain by our own efforts alone. The privileged place to abundantly receive these virtues is the sacraments, by means of which Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit on behalf of the Father.

Specifically, let us prepare ourselves better to receive the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, as they are the principle fountains of grace.

The second reading has presented us with the new Jerusalem, the holy city *coming down out of heaven from God, gleaming with the splendour of God*

(*Rev* 21:10-11). It is a call to intensely desire our definitive homeland, where our Lord has gone to prepare a place for us (cf. *Jn* 14:2-3). The solemnity of the Ascension (which we will celebrate next week) is an invitation to not forget that our definitive home is Heaven: a truth which, at the same time, gives meaning to our existence on earth. As St Josemaría writes, “our calling discloses to us the meaning of our existence. It means being convinced, through faith, of the reason for our life on earth. Our life, the present, past and future, acquires a new dimension, a depth we did not perceive before. All happenings and events now fall within their true perspective: we understand where God is leading us, and we feel ourselves borne along by this task entrusted to us.”[2]

3. I now address the new priests. Consider, my sons, the words of the

gospel of St John to which we have listened. In the intimacy of the last supper, after instituting the Eucharist and the priesthood, Jesus said:

Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him (Jn 14:23). Within a few moments, the Holy Spirit will descend upon you in a new way. You will receive his anointing which will make of you living instruments of God's grace by the power to consecrate *in persona Christi* the Body and Blood of our Lord, by the power to pardon sins and by the duty to preach the Word of God with his authority. This grandeur is compatible with our littleness for our Lord entrusts these gifts to us so that we might guide souls to eternal life. Let us ask with St Josemaría, on behalf of all priests, for "the grace to perform holy things in a holy way, to reflect in every aspect of our lives the wonders of the greatness of God."[3]

A good way to attain this end is to love the Sacred Host more and more each day. May we think more frequently of that point from *The Way*: “Treat him well for me, treat him well!”[4]

Let us call to mind some other words of the founder of the Work. On the occasion of a priestly ordination of some faithful of Opus Dei, he wrote: “They are being ordained to serve. They are not being ordained to give orders or to attract attention, but rather to give themselves to the service of all souls in a divine and continuous silence.”[5] My sons: you ought to get out of yourselves in order to think only of the souls who will be entrusted to your pastoral care. “The priest who seldom goes out of himself,” Pope Francis recently said, “instead of being a mediator, gradually becomes an intermediary, a manager.”[6] This should never happen. The priest is mediator

between God and men in Jesus Christ (cf. *Heb* 5:1-3) so that divine grace may vivify everything.

Before finishing, I invite you to pray very much for the Holy Father, especially in these first months of his ministry as supreme Pastor; pray also for those who assist him in governing the Church, for the bishops and priests of the entire world and for priestly vocations. And, of course, for these new priests of the Prelature. I especially congratulate their families. By your prayer, good example and many other ways you have contributed to their priestly vocation. I always say this, but in a special way on these occasions: every Christian has the duty to pray each day so that our Lord may grant the Church many seminarians throughout the world. Let us take it as a joyful duty.

May the Blessed Virgin, Mother of all men and women and especially of priests, bless and protect us always.

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Footnotes:

[1] St Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 45.

[2] *Ibid.* [3] St Josemaría, Homily A *Priest Forever*, 13 April 1973.

[4] St Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 531.

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

[6] Pope Francis, Homily for the Chrism Mass, 28 April 2013.

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