

"Treat him well for me"

On 16 October, Pope Francis canonized 7 new saints, including Bishop Manuel Gonzales, a good friend of Saint Josemaria, whose love for the Eucharist inspired point 531 in "The Way."

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Manuel Gonzales was born in Seville in 1877. As a young priest, his love for Christ in the Eucharist inspired devotion in many people amid the

religious indifference then prevailing in parts of Spain.

In 1902 his bishop sent him to preach a mission in one of the local parishes, where he found the church to be unclean and abandoned. He knelt before the tabernacle and decided then and there to dedicate himself to spreading devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist. He invented a new word in Spanish, “Eucaristizar”: “To draw everyone to the Eucharist and place them in the Heart of Jesus beating with love, so that they may live the life that flows from Him.”

In 1916 he was named bishop of Malaga, where he dedicated himself especially to the formation of priests. One of the challenges he faced was “to build up a seminary in which the Eucharist has as much influence as possible. That is: a substantially Eucharistic seminary.”

When the Republican government began persecuting the Church in 1931, he had to leave Malaga, and took up residence in Madrid. There he met Saint Josemaria, who found in him a strong support as a young priest trying to carry out a difficult mission. The founder of Opus Dei referred to the bishop as a “saint” many times, also while the latter was still living. When the bishop died in 1940, Saint Josemaria wrote to his secretary: “You can imagine what a joy it would be for me to have some memento of Bishop Manuel. Can I dare to ask you for this new favor?”

Bishop Manuel Gonzalez was buried in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in the Palencia cathedral. The epigraph on his tomb is: “I ask to be buried next to a tabernacle, so that my bones, after death, as my tongue and my pen in life, will always be saying to those who pass

by: there is Jesus! There he is! Don't leave him abandoned!"

Point 531 of *The Way* makes reference to Saint Josemaría's admiration for the holy bishop: *"Treat him well for me, treat him well!" Words, mingled with tears, of a certain venerable bishop to the priests he had just ordained. Would that I had the power, Lord, and the authority to repeat that same cry in the ears and in the hearts of many, many Christians!*

Saint Josemaría often said that the person referred to here was Bishop Manuel González, beatified by Pope John Paul II in April 2001 and now canonized by Pope Francis.

In the canonization homily, Pope Francis said: "the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray. He guides us in prayer and he enables us to pray as sons and daughters. The saints are men and women who enter fully into the

mystery of prayer. Men and women who struggle with prayer, letting the Holy Spirit pray and struggle in them. They struggle to the very end, with all their strength, and they triumph, but not by their own efforts: the Lord triumphs in them and with them. The seven witnesses who were canonized today also fought the good fight of faith and love by their prayers. That is why they remained firm in faith, with a generous and steadfast heart. Through their example and their intercession, may God also enable us to be men and women of prayer. May we cry out day and night to God, without losing heart. May we let the Holy Spirit pray in us, and may we support one another in prayer, in order to keep our arms raised, until Divine Mercy wins the victory. "

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