

Bishop Echevarría's Golden Anniversary as a Priest

On August 7, the Opus Dei Prelate observed the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination. He was ordained in Madrid with other members of Opus Dei in 1955. The anniversary is to be publicly celebrated in September. The following passages are taken from Bishop Echevarría's book, "Para Servir a la Iglesia"

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St. Josemaría wrote that "a Prelate must be teacher and father to all the faithful of his Prelature, loving them all in Christ. He teaches everyone and protects them with tender charity. He gives himself generously to all, cheerfully sacrificing himself more and more." I ask you to entreat the Most Holy Trinity, through St. Josemaría's intercession, to show me how to make those words penetrate my pastoral service to Opus Dei.

Dedicated service presupposes many virtues, all of them informed by charity. In the first place, [a priest] must be humble, serving with the awareness that everyone needs that virtue. We don't consider it extraordinary when we spend ourselves for others, nor do we lament the personal advantages we may give up in order to do so. It has to be service given freely and with detachment-first to God and then to

men-without expecting human thanks or earthly reward.

Our service as sons of God and deacons or priests [of his Church] has to be cheerfully and graciously rendered, even if it is hard sometimes to hide our sorrow or tiredness: "God loves a cheerful giver." St. Josemaría often said that a smile-open and sincere, even if it takes an effort-is the best mortification.

How is it possible that a poor man like myself has received such gifts from heaven? How can I, unworthy as I am, thank God for having chosen me? The exclamation we all made a few moments ago in the responsorial psalm is so true: "I will raise the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will offer the sacrifice of praise and call upon the name of the Lord".

In the Gospel, Our Lord reminds us that we have not chosen Him, but He has chosen each of us. We must forget about our personal weaknesses, about the ways we so often unconsciously resist giving ourselves generously. My children, Our Lord is the one who has called us to this life of service, unlimited service of the Church and of souls. He, too, is the one who gives the grace to make it bear fruit. Your fruit will remain because [as He has promised,] everything you ask for in the Father's name will be granted to you.

Such great detachment from oneself, such complete service of Christ is possible only if the priest strives to disappear, to set aside himself, his likes and personal preferences, so as to be guided solely by the Holy Spirit.

From now on, my sons, you must strive to forget about yourselves,

determined to let others occupy you. As you schedule work and rest, always be aware that you have been chosen to represent men in the worship of God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Your fellow men must see at every moment, twenty-four hours a day, that you are open to them-not doing them a favor, but gladly accepting a duty that is not to be sidestepped. Anyone has a right to seek out your spiritual advice or consoling words; to hear from you the saving doctrine of the Gospel; to receive from you divine pardon after confession of sins; to discover the presence and love of Christ in every aspect of your conduct.