

HOMILY

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Auxiliary Bishop of Osaka-Takamatsula

Mass of Priestly Ordination for 19 Members of Opus Dei

25 May 2024, Church of St. Eugene

First of all, I want to thank the Father, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, for giving me the opportunity of this ordination. As a member of Opus Dei, I am always very happy to have the chance to come to Rome and meet with the Father and the family of Opus Dei, but it is a great joy for me to be able to take on this role of conferring the sacrament of ordination to my brothers.

Secondly, I also want to thank the families of those who are going to be ordained, especially their parents. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, our Father, the founder of Opus Dei, frequently said that "ninety percent of a vocation is due to one's parents." In a time when people claim that the number of priestly vocations is decreasing, thanks to all of you, they are being ordained today. Thank you very much.

I wish for God's richest blessings for Opus Dei, the spiritual family that has cared for these 29 people to this moment, and also for each one of you, their parents, relatives, and friends.

Now I would like to address those of you who are about to be ordained. In the last few days, and especially since the diaconal ordination last year (thank you again to Msgr. Andrés Gabriel Ferrada, Secretary of the Dicastery for the Clergy, who conferred the diaconal ordination here), I am sure you have been meditating daily on the priestly vocation. Above all, you have lived each day with the holy desire to be priests. Now, to all of you, I dare to say: until today, you have walked the path of becoming the priest you want to be. Starting tomorrow, you will begin the path of

becoming not what you want to be, but what those around you want you to be. This means not becoming the priest you want to be, but the priest people need.

What kind of priest do people need? That is what today's readings tell us.

In the first reading, Saint Peter describes who they are and what is entrusted to them: they are witnesses. This is mentioned twice, conveying an order from Jesus. *Jesus commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that He is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).*

The second reading speaks to us of Saint Paul's words about how we priests should live: *They should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them (2 Cor 5:15).*

And the Gospel tells us what Jesus said about Himself. *I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11).*

Dear ordinands, continue to meditate on what has been said in these three readings.

The priest must be a good shepherd, like Christ, but also a good sheep, so to speak. Shortly before today's reading, Jesus said, *The sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers (Jn 10:4-5).*

We priests must also listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow it. This reminds us, as members of Opus Dei, of another animal, aside from sheep: the donkey. Saint Josemaría Escrivá liked to compare himself to this animal:

"I am your donkey, Jesus... And from your donkey, Child God, do as you wish: like the mischievous children of the earth, pull my ears, hit this big donkey hard, make him run for your pleasure... I want to be your donkey, patient,

hardworking, faithful..." (*Intimate Notes*, no. 313)

The donkey hears his master's voice with his big ears. Thirty-six years ago, when I was ordained a priest, I gave Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, then Father, an ornament lined with origami donkeys. There were 19 small donkeys (19 of us were ordained) in a line, following two slightly larger donkeys. When I handed it to him, I explained: "The donkey leading the way is whispering something in the ear of the second donkey. This is the Father listening to what our Father says." Don Álvaro was very happy and said to me: "This is very good: I am listening to what the Founder says!"

The saints recognized by the Catholic Church are an example for all Catholics. And for us, the members of Opus Dei, among so many saints, Saint Josemaría Escrivá is the example to which we must always return. We are all Christians. We are not "Trinitarians." "The love of God has a name and a face; Jesus. The person we love is Jesus" (Pope Francis, Angelus, August 11, 2013). So, we are Christians. To go a little further, I dare to say that we are "Saint-Josemaria-ians." He's not someone who died almost 50 years ago, but someone who continues to help us today. Listening to Saint Josemaría, who said, "from Heaven I will help you more," is the way for us to walk as faithfully as a donkey. "To be faithful daughters and sons of Saint Josemaría is our vocational path to being faithful daughters and sons of God in Christ," the Father said (Letter from the Prelate, March 19, 2022, no. 4)

All members of Opus Dei around the world recite a prayer, the "Preces," daily. In it, we pray this: "*Ad Sanctum Iosephmaríam Conditórem nostrum. Intercéde pro fíliis tuis ut, fidéles spirítui Óperis Dei, labórem sanctificémus et ánimas Christo lucrifácere quaerámus.*" ("To Saint Josemaría, our Founder. Intercede for your children so that, being faithful to the spirit of Opus Dei, we may sanctify our work and seek to win souls for Christ.")

You will now receive the Sacrament of Ordination and become priests. As Saint Josemaría wanted you to be, you

will be "one hundred percent priests." So, from today on, be faithful to the spirit of Opus Dei, sanctify your daily priestly work, lead all people to Christ, and live only for that.

I will conclude by telling you a Japanese proverb. Japan is a country with a food culture based on rice consumption. There is a difference between a barley stalk and a rice stalk. When harvested, barley stalks stand upright, but rice stalks bend under the weight of the rice. Hence, there is a saying: "The more a rice grain grows, the more it bends." The more experience you gain as a priest from now on, the more important it is to be more humble. If you are humble, you will bear more fruit.

Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam. All, with the Pope, to Jesus through Mary. "She invites us, as in her Annunciation, to present with humility the questions that lead to light, always concluding with the obedience of faith: *Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word (Lk 1:38)*" (Saint John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 14).

May it be. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.