

Isidoro Zorzano Is Declared Venerable

On Wednesday, December 21, Pope Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the decree on the heroic virtues of Isidoro Zorzano (1902–1943), an engineer who joined Opus Dei in 1930.

Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, auxiliary vicar and vicar general of Opus Dei, who became the acting head of the prelatore upon the death of Bishop Javier Echevarría, made the following statement upon learning of the news from the Holy See: “This is a moment of special joy and gratitude towards Pope Francis, coming at the same time that we mourn the loss of our beloved Prelate.”

He also stated, “Isidoro Zorzano was an example of industriousness and spirit of service in professional work, commitment to social justice (shown in attentiveness and respect towards his colleagues), love for the Eucharist, great faith in God and sensitivity towards people in need. United to all the faithful and friends of the Prelature, and to the many people with devotion to Isidoro, I ask our Lord that Isidoro’s example will help us to grow in these features so important in the life of a Christian, and to be good sons and daughters of the Church.”

In an interview, the postulator of the cause, Monsignor José Luis Gutiérrez, stressed Isidoro’s loyalty and proposed him as a model for workers. Monsignor Gutiérrez noted that Isidoro’s reputation for sanctity

is widespread (over 5,000 accounts of favors attributed to his intercession have been received), and suggested taking advantage of this new step towards his beatification to ask for favors and miracles through Isidoro’s intercession.

A biographical sketch

Isidoro Zorzano was born in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on September 13, 1902. Three years later his family emigrated to Spain and settled in Logroño. During his high school years he became friends with a classmate, Josemaría Escrivá. As an adolescent, Isidoro began to live his faith more seriously, and he looked for a priest who could advise him on living a strong Christian life. Isidoro carried out works of mercy, and always sought to help those around him. After obtaining a degree in industrial engineering, in 1927, he worked in a shipyard in Cadiz. Later he moved to Malaga and began working in the Andalusian Railway Company. There he also gave classes in the local Industrial School. During this period he began to feel a growing spiritual restlessness.

In 1930, Josemaría Escrivá (who had been ordained a priest five years earlier) explained to him the message of Opus Dei: to seek holiness and do apostolate in the midst of one’s daily work and duties. Isidoro recognized that this ideal corresponded to his own aspirations in life and decided to join Opus Dei. He deepened his life of prayer, woke early to attend daily Mass and receive Communion, and collaborated in works of assistance to the needy. He was known for his



sense of justice, his spirit of service, and his closeness to those who worked under his direction.

During the Spanish Civil War he assisted many people, providing them with provisions, food, and spiritual support. He helped to foster unity with St. Josemaría and the members of Opus Dei. He had a great love for the Eucharist. Despite all the restrictions, he brought St. Josemaría and some other priests the bread and wine they needed to celebrate Mass secretly. He also kept the sacred hosts in his room so that those in hiding could receive Communion, and informed those he knew of the possibility of attending the Eucharistic celebration in certain apartments. To help all these people, he relied upon his status as a foreigner, using his birth

certificate from Buenos Aires. But this provided little protection against being arrested and executed at any time.

After the war, Isidoro worked at the Western National Railway Company. In addition, St. Josemaría appointed him administrator of the apostolic instruments of Opus Dei, a task he carried out generously and humbly, never losing his peace in confronting the constant financial difficulties in the apostolic initiatives. Isidoro knew and loved Christ's life in its every detail, and had recourse to our Lady with filial affection. His great love for God was shown in his service to others and his care for little things.

Early in 1943 he was diagnosed with malignant lymphoma. He accepted this painful illness with forti-

tude and abandonment to God's will. He died with a reputation for sanctity on July 15 of that same year, at the age of 40, and was buried in the cemetery of La Almudena. In 2009 his mortal remains were transferred to the St. Albert the Great parish in Madrid, where they repose today.

*Itinerary of his
Cause of Canonization*

The informative process on Isidoro Zorzano took place in Madrid between 1948 and 1961. In total 71 witnesses testified, including St. Josemaría Escrivá. Later Blessed Paul VI and St. John Paul II modified the norms for causes of canonization. As a result, an additional process for Isidoro's cause was conducted between 1993 and

1994. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints decreed the validity of both the informative and the additional processes in 1994.

On March 25, 2006, the "*positio*" on the life and virtues of the servant of God was presented in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. On November 17, 2015, a special meeting of the theological consultants gave a positive response to the question of the heroic exercise of the virtues by Isidoro Zorzano. On December 13, 2016, the ordinary session of the cardinals and bishops confirmed this judgment.

On Wednesday, December 21, 2016, Pope Francis received from Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of



Saints, a detailed report of the phases of the cause. The Holy Father ratified the vote of the Congregation and authorized that a decree be published declaring the servant of God Isidoro Zorzano venerable.

Interview with Msgr. José Luis Gutiérrez Gómez, Postulator for the Cause of Isidoro Zorzano

Who was Isidoro Zorzano?

Isidoro Zorzano was an engineer who worked diligently in an exemplary way, with loyalty and a spirit of service towards his colleagues. He promoted initiatives to help the needy, and demonstrated great faith and charity in his life as a Christian. Those who knew him remember his serenity, equanimity, optimism, and his reflective and thoughtful manner. One witness testifies that during Isidoro's years at the university, his companions "would go to him as a 'peacemaker' to resolve the arguments they sometimes had."

He was born on September 13, 1902, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, of Spanish parents. In 1905 the family moved to Spain, where Isidoro earned the title of industrial engineer. He worked in the Railway Company, first in Malaga and afterwards in Madrid. He also gave classes in the Industrial School in Malaga. In 1930 he met with St.

Josemaría Escrivá, a former high school classmate, and after a long conversation with him, Isidoro asked to join Opus Dei, which had been founded in 1928. In this path of the Church, Isidoro discovered the possibility of fulfilling his desire to give himself to God in the midst of the world.

His unwavering fidelity was always a great support to the founder of Opus Dei, in both the difficult years of the Spanish Civil War (1936 – 1939) and also in the development of Opus Dei's apostolic works in the early 1940s. In January 1943 he was diagnosed as having malignant lymphoma. It was an extremely painful illness, which had begun months before and which he had bravely borne with abandonment to the will of God. He died with a reputation for sanctity on July 15 of the same year, at the age of 40. One of his colleagues in the railway offices in Madrid remembers: "When we talked about our bosses, it was common for someone to say: 'Don Isidoro is a saint.'" Another person who worked with him declared: "We felt his loss in an extraordinary way, because his passing was for us like losing a father."

Pope Francis has approved the publication of a decree about the virtues Isidoro lived to a heroic degree. Can you speak to us about some of them?

Isidoro's perseverance in ordinary things was outstanding, an expression of his loyalty. He always fulfilled the commitments he had taken on, right