

God as a merciful Father? Have you come to know our Lord's merciful heart more deeply, his interest for each and every one of us?

Let us recall, as the Holy Father said, that "it is not enough to experience God's mercy in one's life; whoever receives it must also become a sign and instrument for others, through small, specific gestures."¹¹ Therefore, the fourteen works on which we have meditated together during these months invite us to constantly plant the seed of the "first evangelization" in so many hearts that still do not know Christ or that have fallen away from him. With the warmth of our affection and with the help of grace, many souls perhaps hardened by indifference will open again to God's love, and there will awaken in them the hunger to know the good Father who awaits their return.

We place our resolutions and intentions in our Lady's hands, and pray: *Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope ... turn thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!*

¹¹. Pope Francis, *Audience*, October 12, 2016.

Of the Auxiliary Vicar

"A Good Person
Has Left Us for
Heaven," *Radio
Vaticana, Italy*
(December 13, 2016)

By Alessandro Gissoti

Yesterday afternoon, the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Javier Echevarría, the second successor of St. Josemaría Escrivá died. The Prelate was 84 years old. In a telegram of condolence, Pope Francis expressed his spiritual closeness to the members of Opus Dei and recalled Bishop Echevarría's service of love to the Church, following the example of St. Josemaría Escrivá and of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. The Pope pointed out the paternal and generous witness of Bishop Javier's life as a priest and as a bishop, a faithful servant of God.

Born in Madrid in 1932, where he met St. Josemaría, he was his secretary from 1953 to 1975. In 1994 he was elected Prelate of Opus Dei. He was ordained as a bishop by St. John Paul II, on January 6, 1995 in St. Peter's Basilica. His funeral will take place in the Roman Church of St. Eugene,

next Thursday at 7:00 P.M. Bishop Echevarría was also Chancellor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. The auxiliary vicar and vicar general of Opus Dei, Msgr, Fernando Ocariz, was able to administer the last sacraments to him shortly before his death. Msgr. Ocariz speaks about the last moments of the Prelate of Opus Dei and highlights some features of his personality:

—*Fernando Ocariz.* I was able to give him the Anointing of the Sick, and he received it joyfully. He died soon afterwards: serenely, just as his life had always been, a life of service, of self-giving to others. Our hearts are filled with sorrow but also with serenity, because we know he will be helping us from Heaven. As you know, he lived with two saints: with Saint Josemaría, for many years, and then with Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. And he learned from them to be very faithful to the Church, to love the Church, the Pope and souls. I was always impressed by his ability to be attentive to everyone, to listen, to not be in a rush when speaking with this person or that one, even someone who came up to him unexpectedly. He was a good and faithful priest and bishop, close to everyone.

He has been at the head of Opus Dei for over 20 years. What legacy does he leave to Opus Dei and also to the Church?

Fidelity to the spirit received from Saint Josemaría. He was his second successor and always was aware of the need to be faithful to the spirit he had received. This fidelity isn't a matter of mechanical repetition because, as the founder himself used to say, the important thing is to preserve the nucleus, the spirit. Ways of speaking and doing change over time, but fidelity to the spirit is preserved. Reflected in him one saw the truth of the imperative that all of us Christians have received to be faithful to the Spirit while always being open to new possibilities.

Bishop Echevarría knew Saint John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis quite well. What can you tell us about his relationship with these Popes?

He had a deep affection for the Pope—for all of them!—and a deep sense of fidelity, since the faithfulness that all Catholics should have for Christ and the Church is inseparable from fidelity to the Vicar of Christ, to the supreme Pastor of the Church, the Pope. When he was received by the Pope, he was always deeply moved and joyful.