

There will also be the need to strengthen the personal initiative of thousands of people who, spurred by love for Christ and other men and women, will be able to begin initiatives that respond to the great challenges of our day and age: fostering professional honor and ethics, the struggle against poverty, help for refugees, the fight against unemployment, strengthening the family, etc. In summary, hopefully we can contribute to building up the Church as the “world reconciled with God,” as Saint Augustine said.

“In Memory of Bishop Javier Echevarría,” in *Palabra* (no. 647), Spain

As is only natural, I have felt and continue to feel a deep sorrow—like all the faithful of the Work and many other people—for the unexpected death of the one who for 22 years directed Opus Dei as Prelate and who we called, with full right, Father. At the same time, our Lord has given us serenity, because thanks to our faith we know that, with death, life is not lost but rather changes into a better one: into the happiness in heaven that Jesus promised to those who love him. And Bishop Echevarría’s love for our

Lord, and through him for all men and women, was very strong and sincere, and filled with practical consequences.

Dynamic fidelity

In this brief memorial I want to highlight only two fundamental features of his life. The first was his concern for fidelity: an unblemished fidelity to the Church, to the Pope, to Opus Dei, to the faithful of the Prelature, to his friends. This fidelity was a consequence, or an expression, of his fidelity to Jesus Christ, our God and our Lord. His whole life, since asking for admission to Opus Dei in that now distant year 1948, was marked by this human and supernatural virtue, which kept growing thanks to his close relationship first with St. Josemaría, and then with Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, whom he assisted for many years in governing the Prelature. As I remarked a few hours after his death, his having lived for so many years at the side of these two saints, left an indelible imprint on Bishop Echevarría’s soul, which helps explain, at least in part, his deep sense of fidelity.

His was a dynamic fidelity that conserving intact the substance, the spirit, sought to discern God’s will in the face of the changing needs of times and persons.

A few minutes before his death, he left us this concern as a legacy. As the person looking after him most closely in those moments attests, he was praying to

our Lord for the fidelity of each and every one of us.

A special manifestation of fidelity was his prayer for the Roman Pontiff. Following the exhortations of his predecessors, he constantly urged people to pray more for the Vicar of Christ on earth. In this way too he made a reality of the founder of the Work's aspiration: to serve the Church as the Church wants to be served, within the guidelines that God himself communicated to St. Josemaría. A manifestation of that communion with the entire Mystical Body of Christ was his ordination of more than 600 priests in the years of his service as Prelate of Opus Dei.

In this context, I would like to point out the generosity with which Bishop Echevarría accepted the petitions of the bishops from many different places that some of the priests incardinated in the Prelature might collaborate directly in diocesan offices or activities. And he did so despite the fact that the number of priests of the Prelature, although high, was not enough to provide for all the needs of its ordinary pastoral work.

Concern for each person

The second characteristic I would like to stress was his generous dedication to each person who asked for his advice or guidance, or made a request, or simply greeted him or made a com-

ment on passing him in a hallway. He didn't limit himself to just listening; he gave that person all his attention, and was never in a hurry, with an interest whose authenticity was evident.

His pastoral zeal was not limited to caring for the small part of the People of God that the Prelature comprises. His heart was expanding ever more and more. As a priest and as a bishop, he felt the weight of souls, above all the most needy. How much he prayed! For the victims of natural calamities and terrorism; for refugees; for the sick; for peace in Syria, in Iraq, in Venezuela, and in whatever country was going through difficult moments; for people who were out of work or undergoing family difficulties of any kind... Each week in Rome he received groups of people coming from all over the world, who asked him to pray for their spiritual and material needs. All found a place in his heart, as he had learned from St. Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.

Another sign of his concern for others: the day before his death, Bishop Echevarría told me that it hurt him to see so many people taking care of him, looking after his needs. And I replied spontaneously: "No, Father! It is you who are sustaining all of us." In this new stage that is opening before us, I would like to repeat

these words to him and ask him, through his intercession, to sustain us, and help us to be good children of the Church, with the help of St. Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro.

Bishop Echevarría brought all these intentions to Holy Mass each day. The Sacrifice of the Altar is, as it were, the “mold” where human aspirations and works acquire their true meaning,

through their union with the sacrifice of the Cross. I am consoled to think that now, from Heaven, his “Mass” has become eternal: now no longer beneath the sacramental veils, but in the face-to-face vision of the divine glory, with his priestly intercession for everyone. This is what I ask our Lord through the maternal mediation of our Lady, Mother of God and our Mother.